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THE CAPTAIN OF THE GULF.

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EARLY surroundings may colour the whole outlook. A youth used from his childhood to scenes of violence will see them as less terrible than another reared amid order and security, but should he ever awake to a new sense of values the reaction can be swift, bitter and even more fearful than the very violence against which he has turned.

So was it with the young Marko Pausanian, the great-nephew of Spiridion, that most notorious of the many pirates infesting the Adriatic in the first decade of the sixteenth century. Born on one of the Sporades, he had been adopted at once by his great-uncle, for he was a posthumous child and his mother had died in bringing him into the world. At the earliest possible age he was taken to sea, first as cabin-boy, then as powder-monkey, until by the time that he was twenty he had become one of Spiridion's most trusted lieutenants, with a reputation for intrepidity and fierceness all his own.

To him it was nothing out of the ordinary, that life of a pirate. It was a perfectly normal business, and he had never known any other condition. Then, suddenly, the deeps of himself, hitherto unsuspected even of existence, were strangely stirred and his whole outlook wrenched from its customary orbit ; and it happened in this wise :

They had captured, after a running and more than usually stiff fight, a large two-masted galley bound from Venice to Naples. But its cargo had disappointed them, being poor in quality and not easily marketable. They had,

therefore, to depend for their best profit upon the ransoms for the passengers whom they had found on board and taken prisoner. The crew, as usual, had been butchered and thrown into the sea. The passengers in question consisted of two merchants, the wife of one of them, and a girl travelling under her care to a convent at Sorrento. There was a maidservant also, but one of the pirates had elected her as his share in the booty, and she had been handed over to him all the more willingly in that none of his comrades fancied her well-matured charms and somewhat acid tongue. 'But each to his taste !' Spiridion laughed, and let the man have her.

The others were taken to a cove on the Albanian mainland somewhere opposite the island of Corfu. This cove was one of Spiridion's favourite hiding-places, and he had built a number of huts there, both large and small, to accommodate himself and his followers and their various dependants. In one of these huts he gaoled the two men, and in another the woman and the girl.

If an idyll were possible in such circumstances, it could have blossomed in the days that passed on the wing while the pirates awaited the coming of the demanded ransom money. Marko Pausanian had never beheld anybody like her. She was his own age, she was beautiful, she had the most lovely of low voices ; she was bright haired and brighter eyed, and her grace of walk might have been that of some proud, young *dogressa* leading a masque to a music of viols. Her name was nothing of importance, it was Maddalena Foscari, that was all ; she was the daughter of a merchant, deceased, and her mother had married again, another and richer merchant. Spiridion had clapped hands softly when he knew.

There had been but glances, a touch of hands when Marko

Pausanian had chanced to hand her anything ; nothing more : the seeds of an idyll only, and by no means its fruits.

Then Spiridion sent him to capture a galliass learnt to be on her way from the Piræus to Brindisi with a cargo worth the taking. He returned with the galliass in tow. He had been away hardly a week, but in that time the ransoms had come and the prisoners been released—all except Maddalena. Her stepfather had refused the amount demanded. She had, in fact, been bound to the convent at Sorrento as to a prison whence there was no returning. Her stepfather did not grieve overduely at her misfortune. How much, or how little, he ever recounted to his wife must be left to his own conscience.

As for Maddalena herself : since she was of no further monetary value—and also to avoid rivalry and indiscipline among his men—Spiridion thought it wiser in every way to cut her throat.

It was to that act accomplished that Marko Pausanian sailed back in triumph and eagerness to the Albanian cove.

'By the Seven Virgins of Cattaro,' cried Spiridion, 'how was I to know, you shy fool, that you wanted the girl ? Hadn't you a tongue in your head, lad ?'

But Marko Pausanian raged and wept in turn, sought solitude and company equally by fits, and in solitude was open of heart, but in company morose.

Spiridion nodded his completely bald head as might a wise old moneylender in the Giudecca when assessing the security offered by a patrician's second son : for the Golden Book of Venice bears, on this page or that, sometimes secrets other than golden ! So, as might such an old Jew, Spiridion wisely nodded his head, and then looked about for something besides Time to medicine his great-nephew's rages and sullen tears.

As a result, he sent him to Venice to make certain purchases and certain contacts. Marko Pausanian had visited Venice on various occasions before, but then upon minor missions ; this time his great-uncle trusted him more deeply.

Unknown as to his person, and unsuspected of his avocation, his sojourn in the Dominatrix of the Adriatic was generally a kind of holiday. He usually travelled as a young Athenian merchant, and his customary purchases in the city bore out the disguise. He also felt safe in Venice, and care-free—or had so until now, for though he still felt safe enough, he was no longer care-free, nor, on this visit, as may be imagined, exactly in holiday mood.

However, he went about his several businesses with a diligence that aped the normal enthusiasm in his tasks. Also, which may seem surprising, he appeared to be in no hurry to return to the Albanian cove opposite Corfu as soon as his missions were completed.

It was part of his business to become conversant with all Venetian gossip, especially that which related to the outgoing and incoming of ships, and for this purpose he never refused to make casual acquaintances. In that manner he made friends with a young Florentine in the military service of Venice, invalided from Cyprus after a wound taken there, not, however, in battle against the Turks, but in a mere civil broil, one Michael Cassio.

‘A plague upon this leg !’ said Cassio one evening as they drank together in a tavern. ‘Were I a sound man, there’s the very employment for me going begging. Good pay, plenty of adventure, and a fine reward for success—and I know I’d succeed,’ he boasted, for he was a little drunk.

‘What employment is this ?’ asked Marko Pausanian idly, and then listened—less idly. Here was news.

He kept his sojourn in Venice longer than he had intended, and it was not the taverns, nor bright eyes under *fazzioli*, that kept him, but the news which he had heard from Michael Cassio the Florentine.

When at last he came home he had that news for the coping-stone, as it were, upon all that he had to tell his great-uncle.

They were seated before a leaping fire of driftwood in front of Spiridion's own hut : Spiridion himself, his second-in-command Paramythioti, and Marko Pausanian. The cove lay in a cleft between towering rocks rising sheer from the sea. It was like a crescent of fallen boulders fringing a space of sand, and about a mile across from horn to horn ; and a little stream ran down into it along a curving Albanian valley. On the right-hand side of this crescent a small quay had been built under one of the cliffs, and the water deepening from the edge of the sand suddenly, and almost without gradation, there was anchorage close in for even large vessels. The night was tranquil and cloudless, and on the ridge of the further horn of the cove could be seen, silhouetted against the moonlit sky, the furled shapes of a line of cypresses.

'Marko has brought back some mad news,' said Spiridion, and began to shake with laughter. 'My Paramythioti, we're becoming of importance i' the world, we pirates—true thorns in the flesh to Venice itself, so that they're at pains to put us down as if we were men in revolt against the state !' And he chuckled into his large grey beard.

'How so ?' asked Paramythioti, always slow-witted—except in a fight !—and sparing of speech through lack of imagination.

'Tell him, Marko,' bade the old pirate. 'I'm too wheezy from laughing.'

'We've been taking so much shipping in the Adriatic and Ionian of late,' began Marko Pausanian, 'that they've declared war upon us.'

'War?' muttered Paramythioti. 'That's good!'

'It's a jest, my Paramythioti,' cried Spiridion with a guffaw. 'The great Republic declares war on a nest of pirates as if we were the Grand Turk himself—oh, and with all proper ceremony, and a mighty admiral to quell us . . . but go you on, Marko.'

'They've organised a small fleet against us,' the young man went on, 'and put one leader in charge of it—'

'With such a fine title to him!' interrupted Spiridion. 'Tell it, lad. Listen, Paramythioti!'

'They've called him "The Captain of the Gulf",' continued Marko Pausanian, 'and he is to base his fleet over at Corfu yonder.'

Paramythioti spat into the fire.

'By the Devil, that's near!' he said.

'When I left Venice he was fitting out his fleet to sail down the Adriatic. I waited long enough to learn the force placed at his disposal. He has five galleys, well armed and very swift.'

'Five to search from Venice to Sunium and from Sunium to Smyrna?' cried Spiridion sarcastically. 'We must stir ourselves,' he went on, with a jaunty cocking of his old head, 'or the sea won't be large enough for us to have the heels of this "Captain of the Gulf" and his five galleys.'

'Who is he?' asked Paramythioti.

'That's part o' Marko's tale,' said Spiridion. 'We're so fierce nobody liked the job. Go on, lad!'

'They've sent single ships after us often,' went on Marko Pausanian, 'and always with disaster.'

'I'd sink any Venetian galley blindfold!' put in his

great-uncle. ‘D’ye remember that Alfani we strung up after the fight off Rimini?’

Paramythioti spat again, and nodded.

‘He came out after us with a great bluster: he’d find our lair and smoke us out like rats! That he would! He swore it on the knuckle-bone of San Pantaleone. He’ll be damned now, likely, for taking a saint’s knuckle-bone in vain. Body o’ me, how I interrupt! Go on, Marko!’

‘It became at last so notorious an ill venture,’ continued the young man, ‘that Venetians and hirelings alike looked askance at being employed in it. There was a whisper of the Evil Eye; there was a hint of our having the Devil for patron—and they could find no Cardinal to come out of his snug palace to dare salt gales and curse him, by bell, book and candle, from alliance with us! I had all this from gossip here and gossip there, about the quays, in the Giudecca, and from loiterers in St. Mark’s Square, but principally from a Florentine in the Venetian service named Cassio. This man told me that it had come to such a pass that no man would take a commission to seek us out and fight us. At length, exasperated by our own continued activities and the activities of every other pirate from here to Chios, the Council of the Ten decided to make it worth a man’s while to take the risk, so promulgated this gilded appointment of a “Captain of the Gulf,” with an admiral’s pay and rank, and a fleet to command instead of a single ship. Even then, the post, as Cassio said, was going begging, and was even expected to be put up for auction, when a man suddenly came forward and offered to comply with the conditions. It is he who is now fitting out his five ships.’

‘Who is he?’ Paramythioti asked again, looking up suddenly from a bovine stare into the heart of the fire.

'He calls himself Conrazzo,' replied Marko Pausanian. 'It is given out that he is a Dalmatian and knows the coast as his own hand.'

Spiridion grunted, and then laughed.

'Let him follow my wake through some channels *I* know,' he said, and winked in the firelight at Paramythioti. 'Did ye clap eyes on this Conrazzo?' he asked abruptly, turning to his great-nephew.

'No, uncle.'

'If you've not seen *him*, then he'll not have seen *you* . . .' mused Spiridion aloud.

Marko Pausanian's eyes glittered. There was a short silence, Paramythioti stroking his long moustache the while and looking from uncle to nephew with swift, cunning, foxlike glances, to and fro, from face to face.

'The crews were not full,' said Marko Pausanian suddenly. 'They spoke of completing their fighting roster from the garrison at Corfu.'

'At Corfu . . .' murmured Spiridion, and began caressing his beard with both of his hands together, letting it flow, as it were, from one to the other.

'I could play the spy very well,' said Marko Pausanian, and watched his relative with vivid and speculative eyes.

'At Corfu?' asked Spiridion, changing in the repetition his tone from ruminative to sharply interrogative.

'At Corfu,' replied Marko Pausanian, and rose nimbly to heap more wood on the fire.

Spiridion looked at Paramythioti and received a nod in return.

'What do you say, uncle?' asked Marko Pausanian as he sat down again on the sand.

'You had better sail across in the morning,' said Spiridion, and lolled back against a smooth slope of jutting rock, and

with a wave of the hand appeared to regard the matter as comfortably shifted from that moment to other shoulders.

Some hours later, yet while it was still moonlight, Marko Pausanian went down to the edge of the sea and began making ready a small sailing-cutter which he was in the habit of handling by himself.

He did not notice, until it was close upon him, a figure which had emerged from one of the huts and come with a soft, graceful tread across the sand.

He swung round with a hasty oath as a shadow loomed at his side, and then he saw who it was.

'Nara . . .' he said. 'What are you doing here ?'

'Are you going for a sail ?' asked the girl, stepping close to him.

'Over to Corfu. You ought to be still asleep.'

'The moon is far too bright,' she answered evasively. 'How long will you be away from us . . . this time ?'

He laughed lightly.

'Why, do you miss me, Nara, when I am away ?' he asked.

'We women miss any of you who are away,' she said, though she knew, for her part, that she lied. 'It is a dull life cooped here,' she added, and he could see in the moonlight the discontented pout on her lips.

'Yet you are freer than most women in Venice and the coast-towns,' he asserted.

'Freer to be alone,' she answered. 'Madams of Venice and the coast-towns may grow weary of festals and gossip, but we, who have no festals and nothing to gossip over, find even a yawn an event. Besides, we quarrel among ourselves—with nothing to quarrel about except making use of another's broom or pitcher, or oversleeping too long in the morning, or as to whose turn it is to watch

the goats. Take me across to Corfu with you, Marko, and I can go marketing.'

He shook his head.

'Not to-day, Nara,' he answered. 'I have more to do in Corfu this time than take a girl over to go marketing.'

'It's always so,' she said petulantly. 'When will you be back? At night?'

'I do not know,' he replied, and gazed silently out across the intervening sea between himself—and what? She studied him briefly, hesitated, parted her lips to speak, thought better of her intention, and turned and ran swiftly back to her hut without word or gesture of farewell.

He came to himself abruptly out of his dreaming, and stared after her. He had grown up with Nara Paramythioti, and was fond of her in a lazy, fraternal way, but was beginning to see that he meant more to her than a brother, and he was not quite happy in the knowledge. He knew, moreover, with a sigh of discontent, that his great-uncle not only favoured, but expected, the match. His face, had any been there to note it, betrayed a sudden curious fierceness, a kind of renewed strength of purpose. Then he turned his attention once more to the cutter, and presently put off.

He was already a mile or so from the Albanian coast, with a good breeze directly behind, when the first limpid rosiness of the swift dawn began in the summer sky.

At Corfu he was successful in his mission, for when the Captain of the Gulf finally put to sea in battle trim against the pirates, Marko Pausanian, with various other recruits, was in the Captain's own ship.

Conrazzo's first exploit owed perhaps something to luck, for he caught two pirate vessels, belonging to one of Spiridion's associates, in the very act of attacking a Genoese

merchantman off the eastern coast of Santa Maura. He prevented the capture of the merchantman, and sank one of the pirates' vessels in the process. The other limped off towards Missolonghi.

From then onwards, without pause or truce, ensued a bitter and relentless struggle as exasperating to the one side as to the other, and with no quarter given : if one of the Venetians or their mercenaries fell into the hands of the pirates, his throat was cut immediately ; and if one of the pirates fell into the hands of the Captain of the Gulf, he was at once hanged.

Marko Pausanian, making use of his great-uncle's many rascally agents along the coasts and in the islands, slipped back to him what news he was able of Conrazzo's swoopings in the Adriatic, Ionian and *Æ*gean seas. But not always was he successful in preventing a disaster ; it sometimes happened that news which he sent, and which caused, perhaps, some pirate vessel to make for a particular anchorage for safety, would be discounted by a sudden change of plan in the Captain's wily brain—for he was proving a very subtle enemy indeed !—and then the vessel would be caught and destroyed.

For fleeting terms he would obtain leave, and make for the cove, and would there add his own swift counsel for the discomfiture of their merciless foe into the common pool of discussion between Spiridion and his friends and associates. The pirates, whose nerve-centre was the Gulf of Corinth, were practically a confederacy, with affiliations extending from the higher Dalmatian coast to the shores of Asia Minor, and Spiridion was its leading spirit and, in effect, a kind of Grand Admiral of piracy, and to him all the cut-throats of those seas gave an almost feudal obedience.

'I think we will make a change in these matters,' announced

Spiridion at one such meeting. ‘Marko Pausanian shall go back to his “duty” as before, but instead of reporting where this Conrazzo is planning to attack *us*, let him report where he will be at cruise, time, place, strength and so forth, for us to attack *him*. If we gather a full fleet among us—and what more possible?—we may end this Captain’s little career for him at a blow.’

It was so agreed, and Marko Pausanian returned to the Captain of the Gulf’s headquarters in the great Venetian citadel at Corfu. But before he set sail again for that island Nara came flying down from the rocky terrace where she had been tending the colony’s goats. Spiridion and her father, smiling and winking the one to the other as they moved away, left them alone on the shore. It was noon, and the sea choppy, and the wind was blowing her dark hair, usually like an ebon aureole about her face, as though it were a sudden tangle of black flames.

‘You come so secretly,’ she panted, ‘and go so soon when you come, Marko. We seem never to talk now as we used.’

‘I have so much to do these days,’ he answered. ‘We are fighting for our existence, and have to meet cunning with cunning—and speed with speed.’

‘You are going now? To Corfu again?’

‘At once—and to Corfu. I’m going back to the Captain of the Gulf’s Venetian galley. I’m . . . useful there.’

‘I believe there’s a Corfiote girl,’ she said, and smiled, with a woman’s natural dissimulation, as if she were mocking him instead of sounding his heart.

‘No, there is no girl for me in Corfu,’ he answered harshly, then tried to turn aside his harshness by a laugh. But she was not as deceived as he had hoped, even though she was mistaken at that time in her intuition.

' You are strange in soul, Marko. I see that,' she said quietly. ' But not from love,' she added. Motionless, she watched him run down his boat into the water and sail rapidly away before the wind. When, from a little distance out, he waved his hand, she made no response ; nevertheless, she stood at the sea's edge and strained her sight after him till he could be seen no more.

He returned unexpectedly soon, for barely a week had gone by when his cutter slipped back into the cove at night.

' We have him ! ' he reported eagerly, and told of a galliass bearing silks from Aleppo, which galliass Conrazzo had instructions to pick up off Cephalonia and escort through the Adriatic, for the *Dogaressa*, it was whispered, had an interest in her cargo.

He named a rock-browed Cephalonian inlet with deep water.

' We can assemble there, and lie snug,' he suggested, ' and leap out at his throat as he passes. Even with no wind, our sweeps are swifter than his.'

The inlet was known to them all, being one of their customary lurking places, and the plan gained instant approval. A dozen piratical craft of varying sizes, but each strongly armed, were collected, and Marko Pausanian, tired, as he complained, of acting the spy, was given the command of one of them.

They sailed at night for greater secrecy, proposing to reach the Cephalonian coast a little before dawn. The galliass from Aleppo was expected to move by and be met by Conrazzo about the middle morning, and there would be ample time, thought the pirate leaders gleefully, to prepare their surprise. The tactical idea was to move out from the inlet in the shape of an opening fan, the swifter ships at the two ends, so as to spread right and left and then close

in upon the enemy from his two lines of retreat, while the centre of the fan, the handle, as it were, composed of the more heavily armed vessels, should swing on in direct attack.

But it never came to the execution of so excellent a plan, for, rounding into the inlet with muffled sweeps under a sky of intense stars, they were met by a merciless raking from Conrazzo's five ships, anchored inside in a half-circle, and from shore batteries cunningly planted amid the rocks. It was a veritable sea-ambush, with the whole scene flaringly lit by the throwing of Greek fire.

The pirates, who had eight boats, fared cruelly. Two were sunk almost at once, and the other six put about to sea with heavy loss, and with the Captain of the Gulf in alert pursuit through the dawn. In the running action that followed, another pirate vessel was sunk, and a fourth forced on the rocks to utter disruption ; a fifth was boarded in mid-sea and captured, and only three limped back, crippled in spars and sweeps and reeking like shambles, to the cove in Albania.

That day there was much weeping and despair in the huts.

'Where is Marko ?' asked a wild-eyed Nara of her father, who had a bloody slash across his face, taken when an attempt to board his vessel had been repulsed.

It was Spiridion who answered :

'He was in the galley they took.'

For all his long life of bloodstained crime, the old pirate was moved to horror. But it was a selfish horror. He had no such feeling about the others taken in the same galley and doomed presumably to the same certain fate.

Nara turned away in silence and kept aloof for some days, generally volunteering to tend the goats on the cliff terraces ; but it was noticeable that she did not wail or beat the breast

as the other women, and it moved her father to make comment upon it. To him, it seemed unnatural that a girl whose lover had met with Marko Pausanian's only too probable end should not be distraught and a nuisance to all philosophical men-folk. Her pale quietude, because he did not understand it, worried him to irritation. But her reply made him smile sadly and pat her shoulder in superior affection.

'He will come back,' she had answered. 'He is not dead ; he will be coming back. You will see.'

And she returned to her goats dry-eyed and rather fiercely proud in her foolish contention. She was distraught after all, decided Paramythioti, and it had sent her a little mad.

But she was not mad, and her contention was not foolish, for Marko Pausanian did return, crawling up the sand, exhausted after swimming in from a boat that had capsized over a mile off the shore, hungry and in much physical distress.

When he was in fit trim to give an account of his adventures he related that he had pretended on capture to be himself a captive in the pirate galley and that the sudden fight had been his rescue from a slit throat. His tale had been believed, he said. But now he had deserted to bring information vital to the whole colony's safety, for the Captain of the Gulf was preparing a descent upon the Albanian coast-line, and was minded to search every possible secret anchorage.

'Who is it so constantly betrays us ?' muttered Spiridion, his hands at his beard in their customary action.

Marko Pausanian shrugged his shoulders.

'Some prisoner of us may have saved his damned neck,' he said, 'or one of your coast spies has gone a-fishing and caught—sequins.'

'What's to do?' asked the practical and laconic Paramythioti.

'Fight it out here,' growled Spiridion. 'We can rig up culverins on shore as well as he, and this cove can be made impregnable. The women and children can be sent to villages in the hills.'

Then he cursed Conrazzo and his whole race to the tenth generation before and after.

'Why must he come meddling?' he cried violently. 'He has laid my best friends by the heels, and crippled *me*. By the Seven Virgins of Cattaro, he seems to read my own secret brain. Is he a necromancer? He knows what I'm about verily before I do it. It is not often that sea-thieves come to starvation, but we are like to—unless . . .' and he shook a fist in the direction of Corfu, and again cursed the Captain of the Gulf and his whole race to the tenth generation before and after.

They laid their immediate plans, after which Marko Pausanian, at a hint from his great-uncle which he could not ignore, climbed the cliff terraces in search of Nara.

These terraces, sloping seaward, were sometimes cultivated, sometimes bare; principally they were olive orchards or fields of violets; and the hedges were formed of twining cacti. In a breeze the swaying heads of the cacti had the appearance of wavering snakes, which made the zigzag paths up and through the terraces ways to be avoided at night by the imaginative and timorous. It was in one of the fields of olive trees that he found her, seated on a low, contorted branch, and looking dreamily out over the sea.

'I knew you would come safe back,' she said, without turning her face to him or giving him any greeting.

He flung himself down on the thin grass under her tree. Leaning on his arm, he looked smilingly up at her.

'I don't believe you wept for me at all, Nara,' he teased her, half in amusement, half in pique.

'I didn't weep for you, Marko, because there was no need. You weren't dead. I knew you weren't dead.'

Her calm, level voice turned him cold with a kind of spiritual fear. A careless believer rather than an unbeliever, he felt suddenly abashed in the presence of a soul that had been so ultimately aware of truth that she had not faltered in her intuitive confidence. She took on the instant a new aspect for him ; he began to study her more assessingly than he had ever taken the trouble to do before. He grew strangely and incredibly humble as he looked at her.

He saw a clear-cut, brown face under a sun-faded yellow kerchief adorned with a fringe of gold coins. She wore a loose, white Greek blouse and a skirt of blue and red striped barracan ; her legs were stockingless, but she had a pair of embroidered Turkish slippers upon her feet, and clasping each arm was a broad gold bracelet. But he had seen that picture of her a thousand times, and it barely entered his consciousness again ; it was her face which he saw newly—for there was that written upon it now which he had never scanned before.

She was not beautiful, for her features were irregular, and her nose a little too long, though it was shapely enough and delicately nostrilled. Her eyes were black and her brows straight and dark, and the hair under her coined kerchief as black as her eyes, but somewhat coarse in texture. But her ears were beautiful, and her lips : the former small and finely shaped, the latter sinuously seductive over gleaming and regular teeth. It was not a chiselled mouth, but one rather hastily modelled—yet modelled in rose-leaves and fire. Her expression, usually stilled in a natural self-containedness, was now, while equally self-contained, less

stilled, more enigmatic, and he found his mind endeavouring to explore this subtle change of inward mood with surprising interest.

'Would you have wept for me,' he asked idly, almost as though for something to say, 'had it been true?'

She shook her head. But suddenly a tear formed like a pearl and dropped down her cheek.

'Yet you weep at my return!' he said, a little brusquely.

'O Marko . . .' she cried, and hid her face in her hands, and was bewilderingly shaken with great, nervous sobs.

He rose to his feet and put his arm about her. He had often put his arm about her; it was a brotherly act, not a lover's. She neither stirred in his hold, nor repulsed him.

'Not weep—and then weep!' he said. 'Should I feel flattered, Nara, or hurt?' he asked, half whimsically.

'Don't speak to me, don't speak to me . . .' she repeated over and over again between her sobs, whereupon he just silently held her within his arm till the paroxysm had ceased. His meditation the while was not single, but divided; as the Virgilian hero, he was revolving many things in his mind. But gradually he became permeated with an intrusive feeling quite alien to the tenor of his other preoccupations, something that so overwhelmingly astonished him as to cause the former current of his thoughts to run first awry, and then to cease flowing, the whole trend of his inner being turning suddenly into a freshly channelled course, as will a river after a terrene upheaval.

The ignition of passion is a curious thing: there are so many methods in its operation. It can happen at first sight, as with the lovers of Verona; but it can also grow subconsciously, to blossom into fire after long and seemingly innocuous proximity and so with complete unexpectedness. Thus was it with Marko Pausanian. He had held Nara

Paramythioti in the embrace of his arm many a time, from their childhood on, yet it was now for the first time that it began to give him a thrill ; he had admired the curving grace of her brown cheek, had even kissed it playfully and without meaning, but never until now had the chance of kissing it seemed an adventure ; he had even watched her lips in the attractive play of their southern speech, but it was only now that he felt an impulse to touch them with his own in desire and not as an act or habit of greeting.

To translate a dream into action is the work of a man, and Marko Pausanian lifted her face with his free hand and bent his lips to hers. She received his kiss passively, as though such sympathy from him was a natural thing, but as his kiss deepened in intensity her closed eyes opened, and she strained against him and held abruptly away, to meet his own eyes with a gaze unfathomable, half question, half indictment.

‘ What is it, Nara ? ’ he asked, and passion had hoarsened his voice. ‘ Can’t a man tell a girl when he loves her ? ’

‘ Loves ? . . . ’ she breathed, and it was less an interrogation than a sigh.

He caught her to him again, this time roughly and dominantly.

She let herself be imprisoned, and in both of his arms now ; she let herself be kissed as he had never kissed her—or any other woman—before. But she kept her eyes close shut, either from the fear to read the script in his, or from an equal fear to have him read the script in hers, perhaps from both fears intermingled : for that is the way of love’s expression and evasion alike.

‘ I love you,’ he whispered. ‘ Why did I never know I loved you till now ? I have all my lost chances to remedy ! ’ And he laughed happily.

She made no answer, and he repeated over and over again : 'I love you, Nara, I love you !'

Then she opened her eyes and asked one question :  
'And Maddalena Foscari ?'

In the sudden loosening of his grasp she slipped down from the olive bough on which she had been sitting, and then stood and faced him.

'And Maddalena Foscari ?' she repeated.

He brushed a hand across his eyes as though to clear them of a film.

'Did you think I never knew ?' she asked.

'My uncle didn't !' he replied sullenly.

There fell a pause while they looked at one another. Then she slowly nodded her head as if she were a judge who had come to a sudden decision in a debatable passing of sentence.

'I—have—known—everything,' she said with a deliberate stress upon each word.

His whole countenance abruptly narrowed in concentration, until his cheek-bones seemed to stand more starkly in his face than was normal, and his lips became a grim line.

'What do you mean ?' he asked, and forced himself to a laugh. 'What is there to know ? That . . . I found . . . a captive once good to look upon and that my uncle . . . killed her ?' He could hardly finish his utterance, and was deathly pale.

She shook her head, and replied :

'That which you consider the deepest secret of your heart is the thing I mean, Marko. I will not speak it.'

He caught one of her hands and pulled her towards him.

'I think you had better speak it,' he whispered, and his face was dark above hers.

Her eyes blazed.

'Two words will answer,' she said.

'What two words ?'

'Revenge ; spy !'

He loosed her hand and moved back a step, leant his right shoulder against the olive bough on which she had lately been sitting, and folded his arms, half lazily.

'Well ?' he demanded. 'Two words say nothing.'

'You are befooled by Fate—if you have fallen to loving me,' she answered, bitterly satirical. 'To be taking revenges—and suddenly in the midst of it to lose the crying urge for revenge ! O Marko ! . . . '

She had paused at the look in his eyes, at the clenching of his hands, at the heaving of his breast.

'Nara, Nara,' he muttered, 'I have ploughed a deep furrow and planted blood, but blood cried for it—and she was the first star in my sky.'

She had no answer to that, and he went on :

'Night and day her lovely slashed throat has been my torment—and my spur. I regret nothing. What service I have given my murdered darling has been from a new awakening : this pirate life ever was vile, but I did not know it till it touched me so nearly. It turned my brain into ice to think of her in our clutches, and if a brain so touched is madness, why, then, I think I have been mad—or become saner than I was bred !' he added passionately.

'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,' she murmured, and her gaze was deep, hard and level.

'By Heaven,' he burst out, 'am I a stone ? Is a man never to have a change of heart ? If I was bred pirate, am I to remain pirate without remission ? Cannot I, too, hold to law and order and learn to prize it against licence and theft and murder ?'

'You could have left us—and never come back.'

'And had no easing of my pain ! All my life long to have remembered in myself such cowardly meekness as would shame even an old monk ! And I young and a man, with the woman I loved . . . murdered ! Wince if you will, Nara, but that I love *you* now does not mean that I did not love *her* then.'

'It was then that I winced, Marko,' she answered simply, 'not now.'

'And now ?' he asked swiftly.

'I can forgive revenge,' she said slowly, 'but I hate a spy.'

'A spy ?' he repeated, and stood open-mouthed.

'Your dark journeys over to Corfu,' she accused him, with a jingling lift of her head, 'were less to bring news of this Captain of the Gulf than to take it him. We all know, your uncle, my father, every one of us, that someone betrayed us time after time : the agents on the coasts are suspected, but it was really you, Marko—and I know it.'

'This Captain of the Gulf . . .' he said, and paused, and his eyes and his lips were alike smiling.

'He, at least, is an honest fighter,' she cried, 'and a leader of men. He can be proud of his deeds—but can you ?'

'I believe you admire Conrazzo,' he said, still smiling.

'Marko,' she answered seriously, 'do not think that I, any more than you, like this piracy, this wild life we live, our bloodstained money. But we were brought up to think it the only life and way of life, and have had to grow our hatred of it as though it were a tender plant within ourselves, and to foster it in secret that one day it might blossom—if it could. But it should have blossomed with better fruit than a spy's murky betraying.'

'Nara . . .' he began, his smile dying out in a pucker. He was neither angry nor repentant ; but seemed the prey

of a curious and puzzling self-mockery. He did not finish his expostulation, but stared out over the beauty of the sea, momentarily aloof.

'Had you . . . loved me earlier,' she went on, hesitant and yet proudly honest in the same breath, 'we might have fled together to a new life. You might have served Venice at sea, and become—who knows?—one of her great sailors and admirals—fighting in honour, not in shame.'

He tore his gaze away from the sea.

'Have been, in fact, a . . . Conrazzo,' he flashed back in reply, and his voice seemed to rasp with a jealous scorn.

'Why not?' she answered, giving him a candid look.

He was smiling again.

'And put down piracy?' he asked.

Was he mocking her? She thought that he was, and she was moved to retort angrily:

'It is better to put it down than to betray it!'

'Even a Conrazzo must gain information.'

'Does he pay well?' she asked instantly.

'He has paid . . . me . . . nothing,' he answered, and his tone was such that she believed him without question, though in naïve surprise.

They stood gazing at one another for a full minute.

'Are you not afraid?' she asked suddenly.

'Afraid? Why?'

'That I might tell my father the truth.'

He pulled her to him, laughing, and kissed her hotly.

'No, Nara,' he cried. 'You love me—and would only betray me if I did not do thus and thus and thus . . .' and he kissed her again at each repetition.

She pushed him away at last with both her hands pressed against his bosom, denying her lips, and looking into his face with a kind of beseeching impassivity.

'Tell me,' she demanded levelly, and scorning to wheedle him, 'what is this talk of the Captain searching this coast and a plan to fight him in the cove? Do you tell me that it is an honest news you brought? Or that the fighting him here will do anything but put us hopelessly into his clutches? Is not this fight to be the *last* fight—one to give you all your revenge in full? Can you deny this, Marko?'

'How did you guess these things?' he asked, and his question was admission enough.

'There is little in you that I do not know,' she answered, and though she smiled as she spoke, it was a sober little smile, and half satirical, too. 'Perhaps it is the woman in me, Marko,' she added, and was at once grave again, and unsatirical, and proud.

'Yet there's something in me you do not know,' he said, and stood smiling at her.

'Not in *you*, Marko,' she replied, 'but only, maybe, in your outer life—in Venice or in Corfu.'

'Yes,' he said, nodding, 'in Venice and Corfu.' And he continued smiling.

Suddenly tears began gathering again in her eyes, and with a forlorn gesture she turned away towards the zigzag path that led down the terraces to the sea.

He followed swiftly, and caught her by the sleeve.

'We have stood, and spoken—and nothing more,' he cried. 'What has my speaking, or yours, brought to a term and settled? Nothing. And we must not go down to them without . . . something settled. You have called me a spy, and I have told you I love you. Come, I will give up my spying if you will go with me. We can go to-night. We can cross to Corfu in my boat. I will carve out a future for us—and one that a woman can share without being ashamed or a fugitive. There is my promise, Nara.'

'And your revenge, Marko ?'

His face hardened and lost some of the exaltation that it had had.

'It is my eleventh hour,' he muttered. 'My eleventh hour, Nara. Don't they deserve their last quelling ?'

'One of them is my father. If through your betrayal he is killed,' she asked in a steady voice, 'should not I have as much cause for revenge as you have ? I could not go with you anywhere in such a case—nor would you be safe with me if I did ! I am a fierce man's daughter, and his blood is not milk in my veins. But . . . '

'I understand,' he said after a pause. 'To win one joy I must forgo another.'

'You must measure your joy in *me*,' she answered, and her smile was a sudden glory that dazzled.

'I will not undo what I have done,' he said stubbornly.

'No man can undo what he has done—when he has done it in the wrath of his soul,' she replied. Then, immediately, she asked : 'Tell me, Marko—these preparations against Conrazzo's attack from the sea which you have persuaded your uncle to make are really a playing into Conrazzo's own hands ? You need not answer. I can see it is true. The attack will come from land—a surprise in the rear. I see. You are very clever, Marko, in such matters. You should lead men—not betray them !'

He opened his mouth to speak, then seemed as in a flash to have reconsidered his intention. He said nothing. And she went on :

'Let Conrazzo hear that his surprise will fail ; he will then draw off. After this let your uncle and my father fend as they will in open war—and I will go with you to find a new life. But see them betrayed to butchery, no, Marko, I can never do that.'

He surprised her by the reply he made : it was a hearty laugh.

'As you will,' he said. 'We will slip across to Corfu to-night, and I will deliver such news to the Captain of the Gulf as will change his plans. Will you come—and be secret ?'

She looked deeply into his eyes, then deliberately gave him both of her hands, after which she abruptly drew them from his grasp and ran down the zigzag terraces as sure-footed as one of her goats.

He did not follow at once, but stood in that olive orchard for a long time, at first thinking rather than dreaming, and then dreaming rather than thinking.

The night came cloudily over a sea beginning to tumble upon the shore. After the day's heat it was cold, with a wind turning sharp. Nara crept down towards the breaking waves wrapped in a sheepskin cloak to find Marko Pausanian impatient beside his cutter.

He took the bundle which she carried and laid it in the boat, then turned to lift her over the side. It was so dark that they could barely see one another ; the running foam at their feet seemed the only guide to their movements, a kind of clear illumination as from some ghostly lamp that was continually being withdrawn.

'Are you ready ?' he asked, and gripped her under the armpits. 'Put your foot on my knee.'

She was in the cutter almost before she knew, and it was run out into the sea, and he was scrambling aboard and at work with the sail in what seemed an instant. But to him all was as irritatingly slow as to her it had been feverishly swift. Not that he feared pursuit—who would suspect anything but a fishing expedition such as he and Nara Paramythioti had taken numberless times together ?—but

he feared his own change of heart, his own purpose. The less delay, the more likely his keeping faith. And he wanted to keep faith. But to Nara or . . . to the spectre of Maddalena ?

The sea was not really heavy, and they made good progress through the dark, for he was a skilful sailor. They approached Corfu in the early light, slipped in behind the islet of Volo, and ran on to a small quay beneath the long, grey, yet florid, ramparts of the Venetian castle.

The quay was deserted save for a few fishermen, gossiping in the sun. Marko Pausanian tied up, helped Nara ashore, and taking her arm, bent his steps towards a paved way that led up and up to the castle's frowning gate. The fishermen paused in their gossip as they passed by. But Marko Pausanian took no notice of them ; they took no notice of him. Nara, however, felt a curious discomfort as she received, only too tangibly, their glances upon her back.

She had landed with Marko at the same place and in the same way many a time, but had never experienced any similar discomfort of soul. Was it that Marko's spying had become generally known, and that he was distrusted and hated, and that she was now tarred with the same obloquy ?

At the gate was a poor ass, heavily laden with carpets from Asia Minor, and a chaffering Levantine, its master, half Greek, half Anatolian, gesticulated in the face of the corseleted, morioned sentry who was good-humouredly threatening him with his pike.

' We want nothing,' the sentry was saying, ' neither your wares, nor your ass—nor you either.'

' But the Captain—let me but see the Captain—and one sight of my beautiful carpets—let me but see the great Captain of the Gulf—or his lieutenant—or his body-servant—or—'

'Neither his cook nor his go-between!' replied the sentry. 'Be off!'

At that moment he became aware of the approach of Marko Pausanian and Nara, and stiffened where he stood.

('Another who despises us,' thought Nara, beginning to feel utterly forlorn.)

Marko Pausanian went up to the sentry and whispered in his ear, then he turned and beckoned Nara to follow him. They were permitted to enter, and passed on along a cobbled incline between high, machicolated walls towards an inner gate, the lofty, battlemented top of which caught the sun, seeming as though washed in a liquid brightness.

There were loungers in the gateway, men-at-arms in leather jerkins and uncorseleted, pages and menials, laughing and gossiping. They turned silent and uncomfortable at the sight of Marko Pausanian, and again Nara's heart was sickly ashamed. Through a lane made for them they entered a small courtyard, and out of the courtyard passed on under a low, Saracenic arch into a high-walled cloister with a grim turret at either corner. One of the pages had followed at their heels.

'Wait here, Nara,' whispered Marko Pausanian. 'I must first see the Captain and undo what I can. Stay here with Gaetano.'

He pressed her arm encouragingly, and left her, disappearing through a dark, narrow, tunnel-like passage leading into the heart of the fortress.

The page tried to make conversation. He was very polite, and tried obviously to show how accomplished he was in the lighter ways of chivalry; but Nara hardly heard him, hardly, indeed, knew that he was speaking. She had never felt so disconsolate in her life. Her heart was beating

irregularly, and her eyes began pricking with half-shed, hoarded tears. Then, in the midst of a story about a fantastic dream, with yet an inner meaning which it took a poet such as, by implication, himself to elucidate, there came another page, who, after a pettishly scornful glance at his fellow, bowed to Nara and begged that she would be pleased to follow him.

She was taken along bare, stern passages, up a winding stairway of stone, into an antechamber overlooking the sea. Her conductor scratched on a small oaken door at the farther end, an indistinguishable voice made answer, the page opened the door, then stood aside with a bow for Nara to enter, and the door was closed softly behind her when she had passed in. She found herself in a sunlit chamber open to a long balcony, beyond which she could see the Albanian coast in the distance, with golden mountains rising above. The intervening sea was an intense blue, flecked with rippling white, and white clouds scudded across a heaven that was of a blue almost equally intense. The chamber itself, except for a long refectory table littered with papers, and with a gilded chair thrust a little away from it as though its late occupant had risen hastily, was empty ; but she could see the figure of a man standing on the balcony with his back to her, gazing out over the sea.

She had expected to find Marko there, and was suddenly afraid. What had they done with him ? Had his refusal to be their spy any longer been his doom ? She guessed that the figure on the balcony was the redoubtable Conrazzo, the Captain of the Gulf. She saw that he was in armour, with a red cloak over his shoulders, and upon his head a morion of bright steel which flashed in the morning.

The figure turned and stepped into the room, and at once, with a missed beat of her heart that brought a hand to her

side, she knew how utterly mistaken she had been, how blind and unimaginative.

‘Marko !’ she whispered.

‘Even I,’ he answered, and wondered within himself why he could not smile. The surprise seemed, somehow, without savour, without the anticipated romance, the expected thrill. It was a dull moment, not a bright, a pause in life instead of a pace onward.

He went moodily to the table, and stood fingering the papers and scrolls that were upon it.

‘I have a secretary who can read,’ he said suddenly, and looked at her, and gave a half-whimsical, half-bitter laugh. ‘But I wonder how much he reads while I am away . . . spying ! He is fat and lazy—and a priest. I have sent for him. If you were willing to marry a spy, you will not refuse—will you ?—to marry an officer of Venice.’

She could see nothing clearly : golden mountains, bright blue sea, sunlight, swift clouds, red cloak and shining morion, everything, seemed as though tarnished and imprecise, dulled, fluid and without edge or line in a swimming dream.

‘Well ?’ he asked, a little sharply, for her silence was puzzling him—or, rather, manlike, he was misinterpreting it.

Before she could answer, the secretary-priest, without knocking, entered and stood a few paces within the room, his hands folded before him. He was a burly man, with a rubicund face and no particularly benign expression, unless a smirk can be a benediction.

‘All is ready, Excellency,’ he announced in a mellow voice. Its unexpected beauty came, in its surprisingness, like a stone cast into her trance and shattered it. Everything at once was again real and vivid.

Marko Pausanian nodded to the priest, and crossed to her side and took her hand.

'Come,' he said, as though contemptuous and impatient of any need for persuasion.

He was right : it was not persuasion she needed, it was self-justification. But the heart is the greatest of sophists. She let him lead her whither he willed, and presently, in the chapel of the fortress, they were made man and wife.

Immediately afterwards the Captain of the Gulf was immersed in business.

As Nara, from a cushioned corner of the balcony, heard her husband's voice speaking with decisiveness and in authority, her wonder and amazement grew and took firmer shape. Yet it all seemed like a persisting dream. At times, recollecting the old Marko whom she thought she had known so well, she was amused, and smiled, though why she smiled and was amused she would have found it difficult to tell. She was in the midst of one of these long, slow smiles, with the hand that wore her bright new wedding-ring pressed softly against her cheek, when abruptly he came out to her.

He threw a tasselled silk purse chinkingly into her lap.

' You will be dull, wife,' he said, laughing, ' with naught to do but listen to the mumbling of our business in there. Go out into Corfu—and buy clothes. You are Conrazzo's lady : set off your beauty with the best fine raiment to be bought here. Later, in Venice . . . '

He did not proceed with his promises, but stood over her, still laughing, but there was pride behind his laughter—that kind of pride which is abetted in its behaviours by ambition.

He pulled her from the cushions by both her hands, and led her through to the antechamber, his council of sea-officers rising and bowing at her passage, and there, with a swift kiss, he left her and returned to his conference.

She found her way to the outer gate, and was let through with smiles and salutes. The news of 'Conrazzo's' marriage

had already spread through the garrison. She returned the greetings with shy smiles of her own ; no longer did she feel a despised pariah. Life was good, after all. She began singing under her breath an Albanian love-song as she walked down the long, walled incline to the quay below.

On the quay, jabbering to a group of fishermen, was the carpet-seller.

The ass stood wearily a yard or so in front of its master. Still singing, she paused a bare half-minute to stroke its nose as she passed by, making for the narrow streets of the town. She had scarcely glanced at either the fishermen or the carpet-seller, and was only subconsciously aware of their presence upon her way. But she had hardly left the quayside to strike into Corfu itself when she heard a hoarse voice calling after her—calling her, strangely, by her name, or by what had been her name until that very morning, almost that very hour.

‘Nara—Nara Paramythioti !’

She looked back. It was the carpet-seller. He was hurrying after her, pulling the ass cruelly along by the outstretched reins.

She turned and waited for him, partly from curiosity and partly because to do anything else might fix unnecessary attention upon her, and as ‘Conrazzo’s’ wife she must begin to use a due circumspection in public.

He came up to her, pretending to be out of breath.

‘You won’t know me, Nara Paramythioti,’ he wheezed, ‘but your father an’ me, we are old friends—an’ my son served in his galley. He was killed,’ he added fiercely, ‘in that sea-ambush off Cephalonia when the Captain caught ’em unawares. I have no other son. Cursed be Conrazzo !’

He spat, then gave her a keen glance from under his bushy brows.

'I saw you go in'—and he jerked his head in the direction of the castle—'with young Marko Pausanian. What is young Marko Pausanian doing in there? Shall I tell you? He is supposed to be spying. *Supposed* to be, I said.'

He tapped his nose with a large, dirty forefinger, and Nara began to go cold.

'A fine spy—always wrong in his news!' went on the carpet-seller, leering. 'I'm one o' Spiridion's coast watchers, d'ye see? An' I know. Does he take his uncle for a fool? Spiridion's no fool, Nara Paramythioti, an' has looked for the traitor this month or more. And what a traitor! No, Spiridion be no fool. He set a spy on the spy—he set *me* on the heels o' his nephew. On'y last week he did so. D'ye see? An' now I know. I says, now I know, Nara Paramythioti, an' you came over with him this very morning, an' he be two men in one—d'ye see?—Marko Pausanian, the false spy o' his uncle, an' Conrazzo, Captain o' the Gulf, on whom—he, he, he!—he ha' been spying—or should a poor old carpet-seller say "*for* whom he ha' been spying"? Is it too hard a riddle, Nara Paramythioti? I think not. No, by God, I think not!'

She stared at him speechlessly. So all was out! Thank the Virgin, she thought, he is over here and not in the cove. Here he is safe, but there . . . She shivered as she imagined his great-uncle's and her father's possible ways of punishment and vengeance.

'The Captain's *next* attack,' went on the carpet-seller, 'will not come off so well, Nara Paramythioti. Your father will ha' surer news than that your fancy youth will ha' sent over, d'ye see? From now on,' he continued, again tapping his nose and leering, 'his double game be finished—an' his cock's spurs are blunt.'

He shook a fist towards the castle, leered at her once more,

and then, pulling his overladen ass cursingly after him, left her where she stood and trudged on into the irregular byways of the poorer part of the town. At the same time a jangling carillon began from the tower of the nearest church.

Her desire for buying clothes was quenched ; her impulse was to turn back at once and warn Marko Pausanian—she could not think of him as yet as Conrazzo—against the carpet-seller. Then, suddenly, at a single thought, her despair vanished : things had become equalised ; Marko could continue as Conrazzo, with good chances of fame and fortune ; the carpet-seller could be let warn Spiridion ; and the battles against the pirates would be fought henceforward with clean hands and as any other naval warfare in the Adriatic and Ionian seas, with the luck depending upon skill and courage and not upon treachery. She began humming the Albanian love-song again, and pursued her way after all into the town to purchase gay stuffs and adornments.

She returned thrilled with her acquisitions, and in a clear-hearted, exultant mood. The Captain of the Gulf would advance from honour to honour and become in time one of Venice's most famous mercenaries, and she would be at his side, the queen of his glories.

They supped together alone, in a little, candle-lit, arrased chamber, and as they ate she told him about the carpet-seller. He thought as she did ; a stone rolled away from his heart, and he pledged her gaily :

‘ To the new life and the end of the old ! ’

They laughed, and exchanged dreams, and made love ; they mistook the world for a rehabilitated Eden. But they were young, and passionate, and happy.

He told her of how he had won over his council to a new plan of action, divulging—he had little known how truthfully !—that Spiridion had had wind of the proposed descent

on his Albanian headquarters and already had taken adequate precautions against surprise. All this supposedly as the result of his, Marko Pausanian's, own spying. The plan now was to play the fox rather than the lion, and to endeavour to lure Spiridion to sea by the use of false merchantmen, seemingly easy prey, but only decoys to lead him into a running battle far enough out from his base to have it fought ding-dong to a finish. That would be strategy against strategy, fair fighting—and without stabbing in the back.

She kissed him for very joy of honour regained within himself, and their night was without cloud. But the sea had begun to moan, and to lash at the rocks below; and the sky by no means was without cloud—sullen, massive, moon-hiding cloud.

It was still stormy at morning, with a rising wind blowing down the Adriatic, cold from the northern snows. Nara, for all her happiness, shivered as she looked forth upon a coast iron and fanged. Soon during the day, however, she began to glow again, listening to the praises of her husband, whose daring, not only as leader but as secret penetrator into the enemy's lairs, was the theme of his officers' courtesy to her. There had never been a commander who had so adventurously combined the two parts, leader and spy together. His men worshipped him.

The Captain smiled when his wife repeated the more extravagant of their praises.

'They do not know everything,' he said. 'They do not know that I come myself from that nest of pirates—only that I had a friend there. They possibly now think that *you* were that friend! All is well that is well believed, my Nara!'

She laughed up into his embrace.

At the edge of the harbour under the castle was a small shipyard, and there, like a fly caught in a web of scaffolding,

towered the curved framework of a new galley, for it was a period of intense Venetian shipbuilding against the growing menace of the Turks.

About noon the Captain of the Gulf went down to this yard to inspect the work in progress, and so far satisfied his wife's gay and almost childlike curiosity as to take her with him.

He was wearing neither morion nor cuirass, but only a sailor's boat-cloak over his embroidered jerkin, and a flat, dark blue, velvet cap on his head.

To Nara the scene was curiously eerie : the interlaced woodwork of the high scaffolding ; the looming bulk of the hull, like a beast's belly ; the noise of hammering ; the sibilant, almost secretly mordant undercurrent of sawing ; the sudden emergence of heads, shoulders or arms at unexpected places above her as the shipwrights moved about on their occasions. It was with difficulty that she refrained from shuddering openly, and she mocked at herself for a coward and a fool.

To ease her racing imagination she looked down to the sea, washing some few feet below and beside the shipyard. It was a kind of miniature bay, and the water was there comparatively calm. But, even outside, the sea was lessening now, the storminess having begun to subside about an hour ago. But it was still blowing off land.

Peering down, she saw a long, narrow boat, with three rowers, resting on their oars and looking up into the scaffolding. They were very still, very intent, and their faces were strained. Fishermen, thought Nara, who were pausing awhile, with puckered interest, to study the shape of the new galley. She smiled down at them, but they took no notice of her.

Then she looked round again. The Captain was standing

beside the unpainted, raw prow, with one hand upon it, talking to the Overseer. Suddenly, as though her eyes were compelled by something beyond volition, she looked up into the criss-cross mazes of that wooden web—to see a face staring intently down from an ambush of timber some few feet above the spot where Marko Pausanian was standing.

The expression in the carpet-seller's eyes told her everything as at a clap, and she shrieked out :

'Marko, take care !'

But it was too late. A long knife, flung with cool and desperate accuracy, gleamed snakelike down and struck straight to the heart.

'That for my son !' cried the carpet-seller, and almost in the same instant, swinging from joist to joist of the scaffolding, he dropped into the waiting boat, the oars dipped at once and pulled strongly, swiftly, flashingly, and he was away seaward.

There was no vessel manned, no readiness for pursuit ; he had to be let escape.

Nara, kneeling at the side of the dying Marko Pausanian, was too distraught to know then what she knew—and taught her child to know—later : namely, that revenge, once entered upon, can no longer be controlled, and that its repercussion is often more oblique than direct.

## LADY WEMYSS.

APRIL 30, 1937.

(A Personal Memoir.)

BY PAMELA HINKSON.

IN the days immediately after her death, when memories of her had the clearness and radiance and simplicity that come at such a time, as if for a mercy and a benediction, it was not one person only that, writing or speaking of Lady Wemyss, used the word 'golden.' It was the word that came at once for my thoughts of her and of Stanway, the house that is literally golden, with its walls of deeply coloured Cotswold stone and the yellow-tinged glass in the windows, that suggests always a sun shining into them and a sun shining out of them.

That word for her describes more even than a colour of the spirit and mind. Hers was a golden world, a golden age in many senses. It is hard to touch or define in words the peculiar enchantment of the family to which she belonged, and the life about them which was of their making. None of the ordinary definitions of charm convey the Wyndham gifts. Brilliance of beauty, of intellect, of wit, of eternal youth, of appreciation of life—and what can only be described as a genius for living. A rich heritage of breeding and tradition and background, to which they gave back a service in proportion to the gifts given them. A consciousness of their heritage that was at once the simplest and proudest thing in the world. Someone said once that it was a beautiful sight to see the Wyndhams together, all so full of love

and admiration and delight in one another. Possibly the only indulgence they allowed themselves was that intense family love—a peculiarly delicate and beautiful and untroubled thing, as it could remain in such a life as theirs, where there is no crowding, no pressing of the small material cares, that in another life tend to take the gold away, however strong the steel of love that lies beneath.

Readers of the letters of their ancestor, Lord Edward Fitzgerald and his family, will find in them the same love and admiration of one Fitzgerald for another.

With that simple and perfectly humble awareness and recognition of their own gifts, there went the most complete and generous appreciation of the gifts and the traditions of others, however simple—not an aloof appreciation—it was part of their genius for friendship, that joy in their friends and their friends' lives. They were as anxious to enjoy you as they were that you should enjoy them. They were always interested, always ready to share, as they were ready to sympathise and help. This was as much a part of themselves as their love for each other and for their houses, Clouds<sup>1</sup>—Stanway,<sup>2</sup> which held their riches of living and loving. No family ever had such a gift for friendship as the Wyndhams and their descendants. Of this I am quite sure. There is something royal and magnificent in that way of giving out which I associate with them. It is in their wonderful letters and in their talk. That is the most splendid generosity of all, that gives recklessly of self, taking the risk which smaller, more cautious natures fear, since to give such friendship is to lose one's invulnerability, having given something

<sup>1</sup> Clouds, East Knoyle, built by Lady Wemyss' father, Mr. Percy Wyndham, in 1885.

<sup>2</sup> Stanway, Lord Wemyss' house in the Cotswolds and Lady Wemyss' home after her marriage.

of one's self, laying down one's defences against possible wound or hurt.

'I have no need in me except to help my friends, and to be fond of them and to assist their happiness . . .' George Wyndham once wrote to a friend, and he lived up to that. Because of that giving, that thought for a friend, a high noble consciousness of the sacred duties of friendship, they had and have a rarely developed sympathy. I think of a glance, a smile, a swift radiance sent across a room to catch your thought and prove the sharing of it. You had said nothing, but you were not alone. 'I know all about that . . .' written in a letter, was said also constantly without any words. As, at a meeting with Lady Wemyss, after a comparatively long period : 'I have often thought of you.' And that smile that told you, if you had not believed the words, that they were the simple truth. She had thought of you and of your life, and of your troubles and problems which she remembered among so many others as though she had had some neatly-ordered storing-place for such things. That was not possible, knowing her. The world of her sympathy must have been as crowded, and full of beautiful confusion, as the paper on which she wrote her letters with the many after-thoughts running round the edges of them. As each of these after-thoughts was important and lovely and trembling with sympathy—her writing indeed had a suggestion of wings—so, into the storing-place of her friends' experiences, which they had brought naturally to her, she could put her hand with unerring touch and find, among so many, the one she sought and that sought her. To be in trouble, and for her to be aware of it, was to turn in darkness and find suddenly a lighthouse, firm among dark stormy waters. A friend and fellow guest with her at the house of one of her daughters in recent years, saw that flame kindled.

It had been as though, in this, her loveliest age, she had come there to rest a little, leaving for a moment the myriad things she thought of for others every hour, at Stanway and elsewhere. (J. M. Barrie said of her that, like his mother, she went about always with her mouth full of nails—to hammer into walls that otherwise might have fallen.)

I have a picture of her, then, lying on a sofa, suffering from arthritis but never speaking of it—only the strange newer brightness of the pain in her face betraying it. Resting, she was still giving out, anxious to help a young writer by reading a book in typescript, by making suggestions, always apt and wise. Sometimes—or often—she dropped out one of the phrases that were peculiarly hers—the whole spirit of a story, told in as few as possible words. If one picked it up, and begged permission to use it, she smiled her consent, only glad if it was of any help. Discovering a real trouble and moment of crisis close to her, of which she had been unaware, it was as though she came back from a little peaceful distance into which she had drifted, because for the moment it seemed almost as if no one had need of her and took the sticks she used in her last years and which she made, by her use of them, only an added grace and beauty, and set out on her mission of aid. Almost, she took a lantern. I think she took many such lanterns in her life, going out into the storm and darkness of the world, like some royal saint or great abbess of old, to look for the hurt and the lost and hungry. One who twice saw that light spring up in her, remains blessed by the experience.

She wrote of her own mother, Mrs. Percy Wyndham, who was Lord Edward's grand-daughter :

' My mother had deep-set glowing eyes with dark eyebrows, thick eyelashes, and hair that grew low over her beautiful forehead. Her expression never lost its brilliance,

she never faded nor grew dim, nor did she ever fail her many friends in any way. Even as a child I remember noticing how the temperature of the whole house fell when she went away, even for a day. It was like the difference in winter time between a room with a cold and empty grate, or a lovely glowing fire ; the whole house became happier, brighter, and better when she came home again. . . . My mother's taste in literature and art was her own, her friends followed her. Her delight in what was beautiful and good rejoiced their hearts, they seemed to feed from her hand and none went away empty. Juliet aptly describes my mother's nature when, leaning from her balcony, she says to Romeo : " My bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep, the more I give to thee the more I have, for both are infinite . . ." Her bounty and love for all her friends was infinite. . . .

This might have been written of, and for, Lady Wemyss herself.

Of her, her own youngest daughter wrote, in that still moment when it seems as if the breath of the world were held, no sound, no dropping of a leaf disturbing the immortal golden hour, as though a spirit lingered on the way from one world to another :

' Of late years we seemed to look after and make plans for her—but always she kept us all going—and explained ourselves and each other and the world away. Nothing was an effort, yet everything soared and shone. . . . Now . . . just when you are falling over the precipice the tender smile comes to lift and bundle one along, as so often . . . '

One cannot separate her from her background. Into their love of England, the Wyndhams put an added richness and imagination because their blood was less purely English even than that of most of their class. Irish and French and Scottish mingled in them, with such varied gifts as must

almost, one feels at times, have struggled with each other for supremacy, and, making an even race at last, left a strength and energy of spirit—one, made of so many—that must sometimes have worn out the body that held it.

She had a way of telling you some small memory, recalling a ride, perhaps, that she had had with her brother, George, from Clouds over the Wiltshire Downs. She would remember the places to which they had ridden and repeat the English country names—Stockbridge, Nether Avon, Grovely Wood. Riding with family parties and with friends, or long walks at night from village to village, or to the top of a hill to see the sun rise, were favourite occupations of the Clouds and Stanway families. As was reading aloud, and discussing and enjoying a book to the full, afterwards. The hint, the picture, the feeling of joy conveyed in a memory, was not the mere recollection of an amusement and pleasure. These were part of their love for England. A memory of Clouds : ‘Many a discussion on politics and other subjects between Papa, Sir Oliver Lodge, A. J. B., Hugo, Evan, Ego and others, while the gorse shed its fragrance and the larks sang,’ is characteristic ; and the comment : ‘Those were happy days.’ Another, of long Easter Monday drives to the steeplechases at Wincanton—in an old landau behind black horses bought when Mr. Wyndham was High Sheriff : ‘I used to take the *Shropshire Lad* and read bits of it to him to help us on the way,’ is revealing, too.

From a point near Stanway, Lady Wemyss looked down in April, 1930 : ‘on the fertile vale of Evesham and saw Housman’s Bredon girt with the “many-coloured counties” and mothering a host of little hills.’ She must have seen that view often before this time that she describes, when she saw it, ‘in the full glory of Spring’s fleeting beauty. The

foreground was decked with pinky-purple beech-buds, the larches wore their tender vivid green, and the emerald leaves of the horse-chestnut trees contrasted with the darkness of the yews. . . .'

In my last lovely memories of her, of which I shall write later, she said : 'We like the same country and the same books,' adding that such similar tastes were a great bond in friendship. 'Speaking the same language' was another phrase of hers. It was so she chose her own friends—like all her family, knowing no narrow distinction of class or division between one world or another. Only a similarity of loyalties perhaps—not in the narrow sense. She was the widest person alive. But, to care for the same things, essentially. The only qualification for those, of all worlds, whom she enriched with her friendship, was that they might speak the same language as herself—as might many of the Irish peasants, for whom her brother worked and who loved him, as he loved them.

She told me, herself, the story of a young hunting man, beside whom she sat at one of her first dinner parties in her girlhood. And of his comment to someone afterwards :

'That filly has read too much !'

Another young man was to say later that, 'Lady Elcho carried unsnobishness too far.'

One wonders if she knew that there was such a thing as snobishness. Choosing her friends, she had, like all her family, a special feeling for 'creators,' artistic and literary. There was another door to her friendship and it was the one I knew. She had the feeling of Lord Edward Fitzgerald's great-grand-daughter for Ireland and Irish people.

I have written up to this of her early life, the framework as it came to me, in those brief vivid memories—her own or someone else's—to hold the lovely figure that I knew.

Someone in my childhood, saying : ' Of all that family, Lady Elcho is the real angel.' The Irish tradition of Lord Edward and of George Wyndham, the most beloved of Irish Chief Secretaries, for his great-grandfather's sake first, and then for his own.

One may put of oneself, in such an article on such a subject, only what is essential to the picture that one is trying to make. But any qualifications that I have to write of Lady Wemyss would be nothing without the chief one of all, upon which I can see her swift bright smile fall, recognising and approving—more than a qualification, a claim, because of the country in which this article is written, the country which for every reason held the roots of our friendship. I saw her first—and I can never see that as chance—in Ireland, at Abbey Leix, the home, for so many years, of her sister-in-law, Evelyn, Lady de Vesci—and it would please her that, whatever is worthy in this tribute, should come from Ireland.

The roots, upon which I may just touch, were further back than that, earlier than childhood, struck before I was born—a feeling of my mother's for Lord Edward Fitzgerald, a friendship with George Wyndham. It is one of the benedictions of life, when such roots put forth stems and branches of continuous friendship from one generation to another, making a wide shelter and security in the changing weather of the world.

' I am glad — is your friend,' she wrote, in what was to be her last letter, ' for she is a rare friend, both in hard times and good times—and for your sake and for your mother's sake (whom you know I appreciated in many different ways—amongst the many not only for her poetical gift, but for her romantic love and appreciation of my brother and our great-grandfather, "the beloved Lord

Edward Fitzgerald,") I am glad she is your friend as well as I—as I have nearly got to Journey's End in this world. . . .

From that English setting—Clouds with its magically lovely name, so strangely right and suitable, Stanway, golden with love and memories—my first vision takes her to a different frame—Abbey Leix in the summer of 1916.

Had places that were beautiful, a greater, clearer beauty during those War years, made from the agony that sharpened and intensified all experiences? Spring in war-time, summer, autumn, winter. For one generation, childhood and youth and the War, lived though simultaneously, cannot ever be separated. So, a memory, of country, a frosty winter morning, some magic of an early day of summer, will touch a chord and send one back to the music of those days.

Abbey Leix is radiant, in memory, with that almost intolerable beauty. Yvo Charteris, Lady Wemyss' youngest son, had been killed at the age of nineteen, at Loos in October, 1915. She and her two youngest daughters—one with her husband now a prisoner of the Turks—came to Abbey Leix for a rest, after the more than two months' suspense that had followed the Battle of Katia on Easter Sunday, when two Squadrons of Yeomanry—soldiers from English Worcestershire and Gloucestershire country—had fought on an oasis in the desert, against 3,000 Turks. When the survivors of that heroic company surrendered, Captain Strickland, Lady Wemyss' son-in-law, was taken prisoner; but, for more than two months, conflicting reports came about Lord Elcho. He had been taken prisoner. He was among the wounded at El Arish. Again, he was interned at Damascus. On the 1st of July came the Red Crescent telegram, annulling all previous telegrams sent by them, and certifying that Lord

Elcho had been killed at Katia. Lady Wemyss had heard the news at Clouds, where she wrote :

*'These are the memories of Clouds, bitter and sweet,  
Like asphodels in fair Elysian fields they bloom, for ever.  
Age cannot wither them, Time will not mow them down,  
For Love will keep our memories green, for ever.'*

Abbey Leix has a strange deep peace, in my memory of it, those days. It is set in the country of the Pale, which, lying under the Irish mountains, with all the Irish richness of colour, shows the influence of the English Plantation, in a comforting neatness and prosperity. The little town at the gates owed much, obviously, to the beneficent rule of the de Vesci family. Most of all, there was the beautiful influence of Evelyn, Lady de Vesci, Lord Wemyss' sister, and a Scotswoman, who loved Ireland and its people, with such a love as Percy Wyndham's description of his father's : 'He loved her deep down—with passion . . . '

I never pass the station of Maryborough without seeing, on that platform, Lady de Vesci's tall beautiful figure—like a priestess, in trailing black, without hearing her welcoming voice. She was seventy then, and, as if it was the natural thing to do, she had motored fourteen miles to welcome her guests at the station, herself. No memory of Lady Wemyss would be complete without a mention of the sister-in-law who is her peer, and such another soul as hers.

I heard Lady Wemyss use a phrase once of someone else, looking from her incredibly brave and heroic older age, with such great pity on the young, in their broken world : 'There goes a gallant soul !'

I saw her gallant soul first, those summer days at Abbey Leix, the courage, the fine unconquerableness of spirit, that

was often, in after years, to be an inspiration and an example. The beauty of the background is associated for me with the rare spirits of those sisters in law and sisters in mind. I remember—digressions perhaps, but the background is part of the whole—the great bowl of sweet-peas on the landings through the house, the cool deep peace of the Irish summer days, the brooding beauty of the trees outside the windows, in the long green twilights. I never saw grief and loss more bravely carried, the victory of the Spirit more complete.

Writing this now I discover that some of that vision must have been realised later, seen through older eyes than mine were then. Two of us in that party were still children, but children who grew up during the War and had that knife to cut, even more sharply, the already clear memories of childhood.

We sorted sphagnum moss for healing of wounds, on the floor of the library, with its windows looking over the fields to the lake and the woods beyond. That was our peaceful occupation with the War, in which all of us were every hour deeply and vitally concerned.

There were magic things at Abbey Leix, which remain in memory—a later visit when the bluebells were out, those bluebell woods that are famous, deep rich seas of them with all the intensity of colour of Irish bluebells, that makes their English sisters pale and delicate by contrast—I saw Lady de Vesci walking through them once, as through some heavenly deep carpet, a suitable carpet for her. Under the trees, they came from unseen distance and stretched again to lost distances. Because the owners of Abbey Leix came then, only as visitors, the garden was overgrown. One looked through an iron gate in the wall into a sadness that was the spirit of many forgotten war-time gardens. From amidst the tangle of shrubs and flowers and weeds, struggling with

each other and the weeds winning, a statue of a boy stood out with a strange beautiful youth and life and gaiety. He might have been a symbol.

As in that garden and many other gardens, the grass grew high and ragged too over the cricket field at Stanway, with the players away. That cricket field had seen so many and varied players. Jessop making boundaries; Lord Elcho captaining village teams; and mixed matches of all ages and sexes—Lady Wemyss herself, according to her own story, having once walked to the stumps with her smallest daughter clinging angrily to her skirts, and followed by a string of Chows.

When, at the end of the War, the grass was cut and the first cricket match played again, with some of the old players, and the others, young boys, the same high courage that sent her later to see *Journey's End* three times over made her go down to watch them play.

The flame of their immense love for each other, that had made a radiance over Stanway and lit every room of the old house and every moment of their beings, sprang up strong and clearer than ever before, to burn through hours illuminated for eternity by it.

'I am so sorry for Papa who loved him,' wrote one son of his brother's death.

And for a sister: 'Tell — that — (her husband) is splendid,' and: 'I am so glad she has him to comfort her.'

Again:

'Tell Papa he must wipe out his sons and concentrate on his grandsons.'

I have two very recent pictures of Lady Wemyss, each in company with a tall grandson who had been a child when his father was killed. The quick, bright search of those

never-dimmed eyes, across a crowded London drawing-room for that young figure, which for her was not his only, but must have had a thousand poignant and tender and radiant associations. The absorption in him among all that company was clear—the only selfishness that I ever saw in her. When they found each other, it was as though they looked back, youth to youth, sharing their delight in this finding, as on another night when we all went to a film together, they sat beside each other, sharing their amusement and enjoyment of the story. That answering of their two spirits, with the missing significant generation between them, was a beautiful and memorable thing to have seen.

There was always, in that circle, a perfect mixing of all ages in perfect friendship and sympathy. It is one of the things that I shall remember—hearing from my window young voices coming from the garden and the older voices among them.

As Stanway—which had once been the summer residence of the abbots of Tewkesbury—had been a houseful of children, it remained a houseful of children. An always coming and going of grandchildren, accompanied by their dogs and often by their ponies. The cricket continued on the village cricket field and Lady Wemyss went down to watch the players play. So there were theatricals again—with other players, and children saddled their ponies in the yard—as other children had done—and rode off over the Cotswolds.

The children riding their ponies, or setting off on one expedition or another, would pass the War Memorial, now an inherent part of English country life. It stands just above Stanway, at the cross-roads of the way from Winchcombe to Broadway, and that from Tewkesbury to Stow-on-the-Wold (where—the old saying has it—the wind blows cold),

the way that the men of Stanway passed as they went out to the Great War. It has a beautiful simplicity :

'Remember Alfred Henry Buggins, Frank Buggins, Henry Charles Thombe, Ernest James Townshend, William James Ewington and Francis Lane, Hugo Francis Charteris Lord Elcho, Yvo Alan Charteris, Charles Richard Gerald Mitchell and Fred Starkey, who fell in the Great War, 1914-1918.'

A company gathered together, part of the country for which they died, as once they gathered on the village cricket field.

There is a point farther away, where the road winds at the top of a hill, and, approaching Stanway, you see below you, for the first time, a glimpse of the house, with the old barn and the church and the village—all golden in whatever weather you see them—the light yellow in the long welcoming windows. Lady Wemyss had a little jest which she used to make at this point :

'That's the house down there where those horrid people live.'

I heard her make that jest a little more than three years ago, when I drove with her from her daughter's house in Worcestershire, for the visit which gave me my last and loveliest memories.

Little pictures of her remain as clear as though they happened to-day. Settling herself and a guest into the car for the drive, a bright, half-mischiefous, half-disarming, incredibly young smile, at someone in charge of the practical details, who had, perhaps, vetoed some unpractical suggestion of hers. Her most characteristic and appreciative humour was always inspired by herself. The arrangement of Chin Chin, the Chow, who went everywhere with her, and who, standing on the seat, looking haughtily out of the window,

had an oriental aloofness, a complete unawareness of any mortals outside the family who were privileged to belong to her. Chin Chin was the only snob I ever met in that circle. Perhaps she had to atone for her mistress's unsnobishness. As a family, that was the most dog-ridden in the world. A one-time London neighbour in Cadogan Square told me that the Wemyss dogs in that Square were the alarm of other dogs and dog owners. And a memory of Lady Wemyss', of the first London air raid, is characteristic. With the guns booming : 'I went out and fetched Pina from the Square ; she was very glad to bustle indoors as fast as ever she could !'

There was a tender, adoring jest of one of her daughters, over which she smiled, listening—of how she had dreamed, when she was small, that Mama had given orders that she was to be painlessly destroyed, and as she was being led away, one of the Chows appeared, affording distraction, and the orders for execution were forgotten and not carried out.

That last visit of mine to Stanway was in January. Yet, after the grey day of arrival, for four days the weather was literally golden. I do not know how it happened, but it did. Day after day, the Cotswolds slipped into sunshine from pale mist. The villages were soaked in sunlight. I even remember a yellow sword of daffodils in bloom outside the door of the old church. And it is so that I shall remember Stanway.

With such memories. The long twilit corridor on the afternoon of our arrival. The firelight from my room streaming out into the grey to welcome me. It was like her to give an unimportant guest a room of such charm and atmosphere—the one that her great friend, Lord Balfour, always had, when he came to stay.

I can see her moving through the rooms, that limping yet

eager, ageless figure, the clearly-cut beautiful ivory face, framed in the pale scarf she wore over her head. I can hear her voice which so often had laughter in it. From the head of the dinner-table one night, I remember her glance round her guests, as one of her whimsical thoughts came, and she set them to follow it with her.

'Let us say what we should all do if we had committed a murder,' and her swift certain look and smile across the table at one of them. 'I know what —— would do. She would tell everyone at once.' Which was true.

There was a day when we lunched with her beloved friend of her lifetime at Stanway, Eliza Wedgewood, in her cottage above Stanton village. Standing on the steep path between the rockeries, where a few brave spring flowers showed, she stopped to tell me that the people said that there was always a flower in Miss Wedgewood's garden, even in deepest winter. As, she added, there was nearly always someone on the path coming from the village, wanting something. Eliza Wedgewood, beautiful with the black lace over her grey hair, her rich voice and lovely humour and sympathy and interest in everybody and everything—feeding her birds at the window as we saw her that day—or sorting baby clothes for the village by the fire after lunch, while she remembered what Mr. Balfour or some other great statesman had said in this room—is an inseparable memory from Stanway. Part of Stanway, as she remains to the children and grandchildren of the house. From historic memories to which I listened, she and Lady Wemyss turned naturally to the question of dental treatment for the schoolchildren and the dentist's imminent visit.

Always I shall remember the drive when my visit was over, with my hostess to London, on the most golden day of all.

It was the first time I had had such talk with her and it was to be the last. She had always that gift, which I think of as a Wyndham one too, of conveying glamour, of making you feel the magic of something she was telling you, as in one witty phrase, she could describe a person. Because of her nature, that wit, for all its swiftness, never remotely touched cruelty.

She dropped out her wonderful memories as she dropped those unforgettable sayings, so full of imagination and humour. She could always convey the heart and feeling of an hour many years past, which is a gift that few people possess. During an earlier visit to Stanway we read one of Maurice Baring's books aloud, and talked of it afterwards. There was a description of a party in that book, which had obviously a special appeal for her. Had someone of another generation missed the glamour of it, found the description a little too long, as one used to short modern dances and Jazz might well find the old-fashioned ball and waltzes?

There was only a faint smile, a little distant, because that mist and music were still dreaming in her thoughts, a half-apologetic murmur that one felt that the people in the party were enjoying themselves. I don't think that she said in words that it had taken her back to some party of her girlhood. But one listener, at least, caught the magic from her and shared some of it.

It was on that drive up to London that she turned from something I should see, which she had been indicating, as we passed, to say : 'We like the same country and the same books.' And she spoke then of Abbey Leix, where we had met, and of Ireland and of her brother's love for Ireland.

She dropped out her lovely memories on that drive and I caught and kept some of them and lost others, equally precious. One, of the Souls—an earlier lovely glimpse of

her girlhood when she had gone riding and hawking on the Downs with some young man. It was like a medieval tale, with just the touch of young romance gilding it.

She imitated the cries of that hawker of long ago, with his interspersed asides to his companion, so clearly, that the chauffeur slowed down and looked round, thinking she was calling some instructions to him. I remember the amused, half-shy girl's smile with which she turned to me, after she had waved him on.

Another memory of her first dance. It had been in Ireland—a Hunt Ball, I suppose—and she had stayed for it with the Mayos at Palmerstown in Kildare (a house that was later burnt in the 1922–3 burnings). She had been eighteen, and the first dance was all that such an occasion should be. She said, smiling, that at it she fell in love for the first time, but not very seriously. She spoke of the gaiety of those days, for young people of her world—when no one had ever thought of being poor. And she remembered the day after the Ball, going hunting across the Kildare country : 'With the waltz music still in our ears.'

From such memories, she passed easily in the generous confusion of her life which held so many thoughts and so many sympathies, to the need for water in the Stanway cottages, and how that could be supplied. Again, as I talked, she interrupted me because we were passing Blenheim and I should look at it :

'I am like a tiresome old woman in a play—interrupting,' she said with a smile.

Much else she spoke of on that drive which cannot be written. If I have lifted some sacred veils, writing this, it is for a world that needs them ; as in her privately-printed *Family Record*, she set down some of the thoughts that hurt her most, only so that they might help other people. She

was one of the people who was always helping—as if, indeed, she looked upon herself as an instrument, that her purpose in life. She might—although she would never have seen herself so—well be, as she was for so many people, the Hand of God, Which must always be a human hand.

In this she is, and will be, immortal. So that, in a dark hour for those who are her friends, the thought of her is still the flame that she lit for them, while living. One who dwelt recently among these memories of her, searching among written records, re-reading those characteristic letters, every word as swift, as alive as the flying wings of a bird, turned from that experience to face a possible blow that might await her. It did not come. But if it had come, she had known suddenly she could have faced it. For she had looked recently on immortal courage, for some days, trying unworthily to write of it, had lived in that high company. From which she must go out strengthened, as many a one went out from a visit to Stanway.

It was not for nothing that the walls of the house were deeply golden, that the light in the windows was always there whatever the weather. The fire of her welcome, streaming into a grey twilit world, was the earthly comfort and manifestation of that flame of courage and love—unassailable—that was her spirit. That fire has not gone out, and the flame is eternal and inextinguishable for Mary Wemyss' family and her friends.

TREASURE FOR HEAVEN.

*When we meet again*

*In the strange Hereafter, you will gravely say,  
'I have talked with Plato and with Socrates,  
Matched irony with Heine; Goethe's mind  
Has bathed me in its radiance, and the flame,  
The leaping flame of Shelley's danced by mine.'*

*And I shall hurry to you, with my hands  
Still full of earthly flowers, garnered long since  
For you, not faded yet, and breathless say,  
'A few more mortal years were mine, to glean  
The loveliness you lost by early death.*

*Here is a winter evening with the hills  
Witch-blue in the distance; here, the smouldering sky  
Where a June sunset burns behind the spires  
Of our Northern Athens; here, the western wave  
Washes in opal on faint silver strands.*

*I never saw the mountains, nor the dawn,  
Moonlight on snow, nor any strange and sweet  
Aspect of lovely nature, but I laid  
Its treasure to my heart, longing for you  
In mortal flesh to share it. See, I bring  
These transient glories to this timeless air,  
Heaped in my arms, to enrich even heaven for you.'*

*A. V. STUART.*

*A TRIO OF MUSICIANS.*

BY LAURA M. RAGG.

OVER the head of executant artists there hangs always and inevitably the shadow of death ; not the death of the body, common to all humanity, but that of renown, which is dearer to them than physical existence. The dramatist and composer may hope for immortal fame, or at least for those 'revivals' which fashion grants in compensation for periods of obscurity. But those who have been their interpreters know themselves for 'poor players' who after their brilliant hour upon the stage 'are heard no more' ; and who in age, as natural infirmity removes their means of expression, and the circle of their admirers thins, are enfolded prematurely in the shroud of oblivion.

Herein lies the pathos of a manuscript lately put into my hands. It is an unliterary compilation made by a trio of musicians, in which press notices and programmes, invitations, artists' letters and royal commands are strung on a thread of narrative written in a tongue not their own. Fundamentally it is an attempt to 'peize the time' of former triumphs, 'to eke it and to draw it out in length.' Ostensibly it is a tribute of gratitude to dead and living patrons penned with the innocent vanity and strange humility of the artist who fails to realise that genius gives more to 'the rich and great ones' of the world than it receives from them. Consciously it is a record of musical events in Europe, and particularly in England, in Victorian days. Unconsciously it gives the portraits of three very pleasing personalities—

sisters whose mutual affection was proof against jealousy, of professionals quick to recognise merit in amateurs, and ungrudging of admiration for masters and comrades.

The three Eissler sisters were on both sides of Czechoslovak parentage. Their father took his degree as Doctor of Philosophy in Prague, and subsequently taught in the principal Colleges of Brno, his children's birthplace. He was a man of learning and culture, an excellent linguist, an indefatigable public teacher. He played no instrument; but he had a good ear and musical taste. He attended concerts with pleasure, and was able to sing correctly any air he heard at them. His wife as an amateur pianist conformed to the unexacting standards of her day; but possessed a latent critical sense which developed steadily as she followed and encouraged her daughters' musical career. That career was chosen early by the intelligent and industrious little girls.

Emmy, the eldest, was given piano lessons by the best organist of the district, who had been the first teacher of Neruda (Lady Hallé), also a native of Brno. When Emmy outgrew his teaching she was sent to the Conservatoire in Vienna.

The second daughter, Marianne, began at the age of six to take lessons on the violin, and when she outgrew the teaching which Brno afforded, Professor Eissler determined to migrate to Vienna. Emmy had already gained a scholarship at the Conservatoire, and Marianne before long followed her example. The musical education of the girls thus cost their parents nothing. The elder, moreover, had inherited her father's capacity for teaching, and while still a student was employed by her master, Professor Anton Door, to coach junior pupils in his methods. Later, the widowed Frau Eissler gave lessons in languages. Thus the industrious family were able to live upon a meagre income, and to

decline the financial assistance offered by a wealthy relative on the condition that the young ladies abandoned all thoughts of a professional career. Well indeed was it for the girls, profoundly musical but also profoundly dutiful, that their mother held advanced views as to female independence, and never opposed their hearts' desire. Years later when the same male relative heard the Misses Eissler play at a successful concert given by Patti in Vienna, he acknowledged the rightness of the family decision.

Very happy were those laborious student days in old light-hearted Vienna. Music was the atmosphere in which the Eisslers lived, moved and had their being ; and their ambition was fed continually by tales and glimpses of the great *virtuosi* of their day. Once, after a concert, Marianne was actually addressed by Brahms. The child always contrived to insinuate herself into the artistes' room ; and on a certain bitter evening Brahms wrapped her in her thick cloak, and, taking hold of her long auburn curls, asked if 'these should go inside or outside' the garment. Then there was a day when Emmy's master, Professor Door, introduced her to Anton Rubinstein, who made her play some of his own compositions. It was a terrifying moment with a satisfactory issue ; for after the audition Rubinstein asked the trembling young student to give lessons to his own niece. She also taught the daughter of Gustav Walter, and that incomparable singer of *Lieder* showed much kindness and hospitality to the youthful teacher.

Younger contemporaries, as well as fellow-students, came to the Eisslers' apartment in the evenings to make music. Popper, already celebrated as 'cellist and composer, would bring his 'cello and play to Emmy's accompanying, or would seat himself at the piano and accompany Marianne's violin. Pachmann, restless, irritable, and eccentric, and, at the age

of thirty, still almost unknown, would perform, and listen respectfully to Madame Eissler's wise counsel, that he should put himself in the hands of a good agent, and try to find a public in England. Emmy, still a student, had found one in Vienna, and after one of her recitals received a tribute of mysterious but precious admiration. A little packet of valuable jewellery was handed to her with a note from an unknown admirer, who in those pre-typewriting days preserved his anonymity by a curious and elaborate expedient. He cut letters out of printed matter and pasted them on a large card to form the following epistle :

' A young girl like yourself, who with filial love and self-sacrifice maintains her family, deserves to stand high in men's consideration. Unfortunately there are in life certain circumstances which for ever forbid one to approach the object of one's esteem. These little tokens of admiration are given with the sole object of affording innocent pleasure to a young girl of excellent quality. If this aim is attained, there remains for me nothing but to wish that life will give you all the happiness you so richly deserve.'

In a novel this incident would form the prelude to a complicated romance. In real life it had no sequel. Yet perhaps its mystery made it doubly thrilling to the imagination of a maiden of eighteen.

By this time the Benjamin of the family, little Clara, having heard the harp at a Conservatoire concert, had announced her intention of becoming a harpist. Like Marianne on the violin, she began her education on the instrument of her predilection, studying besides the history and theory of Music.

For three years she worked under Anton Zamara in Vienna. Then she began to yearn for the tuition of Hasselmans in Paris. Her wise mother decided to uproot the family again,

and to make a home in Paris for Clara from which her elder daughters could start conveniently for their concert-tours in Belgium, Holland, Germany, Bohemia and Austria.

In Paris Clara made rapid progress, and felt the advantage of her choice of instrument. She had but few competitors among students or full-blown professionals, and therefore at a tender age had many opportunities of growing accustomed to facing an audience. Her master encouraged her to play in church oratorios, and even allowed her to accept occasional invitations for concerts. He took her himself to Rouen to play at a Jeanne d'Arc celebration in the Cathedral ; and further chose her as harpist when a cantata was to be given in honour of Franz Liszt, who was paying a short visit to his compatriot, the painter Munkacsy. Liszt was present at the rehearsal, and at its close, struck by the little harpist's pure and rapt expression, he pressed a kiss on her brow, exclaiming : ' Voici une petite Ste Cecile ! ' The wonderful afternoon was succeeded by a yet more wonderful evening. Munkacsy's stately music-room filled with beautiful women, the white-haired figure of the venerable genius at the piano, his rendering with unimpaired vigour of his own arrangement of Hungarian melodies, the enthusiasm of the audience, some of whom went down on their knees to beg for an encore : these were indelible memories, made the more precious by the passing of the great *maestro* a few months later.

In the heat of the summer the family went to Ostende, where Emmy and Marianne gave a recital, at which eleven-year-old Clara made her first appearance on a public concert platform. The conductor of the Ostende orchestra heard her, and when his harpist had to leave suddenly before the end of the season, he asked the little girl to step into the breach. So well did she acquit herself that she found herself

engaged for the following summer season. Clara Eissler, with her long flowing hair and small harp, placed in front of the ranks of adult male musicians, was a piquante figure ; groups of children would gather near the orchestra to watch her ; items of the programme in which there were prominent harp passages were invariably encored ; and when she was out walking strangers would recognise 'La petite harpiste' and smile and nod to her. It was a very proud little girl who went to the Office to draw her monthly fees and bring her earnings back to her mother. At this period too she had a *succès fou* at a concert at Aix-la-Chapelle, where she played in a concerto for harp and orchestra by Bochsa and then two solos by her master Hasselmans. A little later she toured in Germany with her violinist sister Marianne, astonishing her critics and her audiences with her mastery of her instrument and her perfect self-possession of demeanour.

Meanwhile the elder Misses Eissler were winning fresh laurels as they toured in Germany, Belgium, Holland, Bohemia, Austria and Denmark. Marianne, though she had not yet 'put up' her long hair—an art which in those pre-shingling days definitely marked the passage of the *Bachfisch* into womanhood—had gained immensely in musical technique and social *savoir-faire* ; and modest Emmy, whom the cares of primogeniture had early matured in character, was efficient both as chaperone and as accompanist. Every fresh success increased their contacts and engagements. Thus when Joachim had heard Marianne play in his house at Berlin, he recommended the Musical Society of Bremen to engage her for a concert. Recitals at Berlin where Madame Joachim was vocalist led, at the singer's request, to an engagement with her at Breslau. Success in other Silesian towns was followed by an invitation to Gorlitz and an acquaintance with the dramatist Mosu, whose play *Der Bibliothekar* is well

known to English audiences as *The Private Secretary*. He was enchanted with Marianne's rendering of *Il Trillo del Diavolo* by Tartini ; and when his fellow-townsfolk arranged a concert to celebrate his jubilee, she was asked to come to it and repeat her *tour de force*.

An appearance at the Kurhaus concerts at Baden-Baden led to an engagement at one of the Festival concerts given annually in honour of the reigning Grand Duke, and this again to their playing at a musical evening given for the Emperor and Empress of Brazil—the former a real connoisseur of music—and to a matinée at the villa of the Princess Elizabeth of Baden. Then, too, they enjoyed less formal musical evenings at the house of an old composer, Jacques Rosenhai, where they met Madame Schumann, who subsequently welcomed them in her house at Frankfort. For her Marianne played the rarely heard concerto by Gade, the Danish composer who had been a friend of her late husband, Robert Schumann. It was not, perhaps, a mere coincidence that the young violinist was presently invited to Copenhagen, in order that she might play the concerto to the composer himself. So enraptured was the aged master by her interpretation that he threw his arms round her and hugged her !

The sisters' first experience of a State Concert was in Berlin, where they played before the Crown Prince and Princess. Princess Christian, who happened to be a guest at the Palace, reminded them long afterwards in London that she had heard them before. Their next royal command was from Duke Ernest of Coburg-Gotha, who after their performance conferred on them the honorary title of *Kammervirtuosen*.

The fact that German was their mother-tongue—for their use of Czek was restricted in childhood to intercourse with

servants and dependants—doubtless contributed to their popularity in German-speaking countries. To Italy they did not go till they were 'in mezzo del camin di nostra vita'; and in France they were heard only in a few Parisian houses.

Madame Blaize de Bury, Madame Buloz, wife of the famous editor of the *Revue de Deux Mondes*, and gifted Madame Juliette Adam asked Marianne to their receptions. Paris, moreover, furnished the young violinist with some of her most precious musical memories.

At Madame Adam's house she met, and was warmly complimented by, Gounod, and heard him sing to his own accompaniment on the piano his lugubrious ballad 'La Glue.' She was introduced to Sarasate, who bade her come and play to him whenever she liked, and gave her invaluable advice both as to the interpretation of his own compositions and on violin playing generally. To her he subsequently dedicated his composition, 'Le Rêve.' The Belgian violinist Marsich, then resident in Paris, was scarcely less kind. He asked her to include in her concert programmes an Adagio he had written, saying she had 'the bowing and the style for it.' He wrote a few bars of it in her autograph book, which was already adorned by some bars and the signature of a noble and more aged virtuoso; Cammille Sivori had been a pupil of the great Paganini, and it was vastly flattering to the young girl to be acclaimed by him as 'ma charmante collègue et excellente interprète.'

Marianne's desire to visit London was fulfilled when she made her English *début* at one of the Philharmonic Concerts organised by William Ganz. Two other notable conductors of the day, Kuhe and Sir Julius Benedict, then engaged her to appear respectively at the Albert Hall and St. James's Hall. An invitation to take part in a concert given by the

Royal Amateur Society, in which the Duke of Edinburgh habitually played the violin, led to a further request for her co-operation in a Musical Evening given at Clarence House, of which she retains a souvenir in the shape of a sapphire and diamond ring presented to her by the Duke and Duchess.

Emboldened by their successes the sisters determined, towards the end of the London season, to give a concert of their own at Princes Hall, and to send for little Clara—still studying in Paris—to take part in it. Many notable musicians were in their audience, among them their friend Sarasate, their fellow-towns-woman Neruda, and a harpist, previously unknown to them, from Wales. John Thomas was delighted with the performance of the youngest of the talented trio. He begged little Clara to come to see him, and gave her several of his own compositions. Subsequently he dedicated his *Rondo Piacevole* and *Romance* for harp and violin to the two younger sisters.

When Clara's three years of studentship came to an end, Frau Eissler, who had never struck roots in Paris, determined to remove herself and her daughters to London. It was a decision eminently agreeable to the musical trio, and was productive of many years of happiness and success. Earl's Court was somewhat inaccessible in days when Londoners were dependent on cabs and horse buses, but it enjoyed almost rural quiet, its rents were low, its houses well built, and its air salubrious.

In 1892 the family found a spacious domicile in Redcliffe Square, in which the three sisters could practise their respective instruments without disturbing their neighbours or each other, in which, too, they could, in modest fashion, entertain their musical friends.

The reasons for the Eissler sisters' swift success are not far to seek. *Impresarii* found them easy to deal with, reliable,

unexacting, untemperamental. Musicians recognised them as genuine and industrious artists. Hostesses discovered that they had excellent manners and were intelligent and adaptable. The sentimental British Public found the trio of graceful, fresh-complexioned young girls a pleasing spectacle, and admired their modesty, virtue and sisterly affection. Their engagements multiplied, and they were soon initiated into the pleasures and peculiarities of English country-house visiting.

The major portion of their almost dateless and somewhat prolix manuscript is devoted to incidents in their sojourn in England. These may conveniently be grouped under three heads : (1) their Command Performances at Windsor, Balmoral and Osborne ; (2) their intercourse with other musicians of the time, particularly with Adelina Patti ; (3) their relations with the principal musical hostesses of their day.

(1)

No British-born subjects of the ageing Sovereign could have been more loyal than this trio of young foreigners. They had, and have, a positive cult for Queen Victoria ; and the day when they received the first command to play before her is marked with white in their annals. The command came in the form of a peremptory telegram : ' You and your sisters are to play before the Queen on Thursday next in the evening. Please come to see me to-day about four. Ethel Cadogan.'

It was a bolt from the blue, piercing and overwhelming, till Miss Cadogan duly explained its happy *raison d'être*. A Spanish tenor, Señor Viñas, then appearing with great éclat in the first performances of *Cavalliera Rusticana*, had been engaged to sing to Her Majesty, who had expressed a

judicious wish that the vocal programme should be balanced by some instrumental music. Signor Tosti had then suggested the names of the Misses Eissler. He escorted them and Señor Viñas to Windsor, and, kind and merry fellow that he was, did his best during the short railway journey to dissipate their nervousness by funny stories. A royal carriage conveyed them to the Castle, and there they found a little suite of rooms allotted to them, where they could change and rest and enjoy the refreshments served to them. Then they were conducted to the Green Drawing Room ; the Queen and Royal Family and guests entered, and the presentations took place. ‘The Queen,’ writes Miss Eissler, ‘spoke so graciously to us that our nervousness soon disappeared ; and when, after each piece, Her Majesty smiled and nodded approval, we began to feel quite at ease.’ Wishing for a repetition of one of the concerted pieces, she came forward to the piano herself to ask for it ; and after the concert she and Princess Beatrice expressed their warm appreciation in terms which brought a glow to the sisters’ cheeks and hearts. The artists were then taken to supper, when they were joined by members of the Household. A special train took them back to London shortly before midnight.

Some eighteen months later the sisters again played before Queen Victoria, but the concert was not in England, but at Coburg. The Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh and Coburg were marrying one of their daughters, and the royal grandmother graced the wedding. After the concert the Duke led Marianne to the Queen, saying : ‘I have known this young lady since her first *Bogenstreich* in London.’ He was surprised when his mother instantly replied : ‘I too know her already ; I had the pleasure of hearing her at Windsor.’

Among the royal guests were the Princess Alix of Hesse and the Czarevitch ; and on the following day their betrothal was announced. So then there must needs be a second State Concert, and again the two Eissler sisters were engaged to perform at it. It was a brilliant function ; but the sisters noted that the future Czarina, in spite of her youthful beauty, had a strangely sad expression.

In the June of 1894 Marianne received a letter from the Hon. Alec. Yorke, then at Balmoral, which contained a mysterious paragraph. 'Will you be in Scotland about the end of August ? If so, there may be some pleasant news for you ; I will tell you when we meet.' The sisters had, in fact, been invited by Lady Glenesk (then Lady Algernon Borthwick) to stay at Glenmuick House ; and the pleasant news was the Queen's wish that all three should come to Balmoral Castle from Monday, September 3rd, till the following Friday and assist at two afternoon concerts to be given in connection with a bazaar in aid of the rebuilding of Crathie Church.

'It can easily be guessed,' wrote Emmy, 'how we all felt on arriving at Balmoral on Sept. 3. It was a chilly, gloomy day, but to us all appeared bright. We found blazing fires in each of our rooms and all imaginable comfort in every way.'

The sisters played not only at the two concerts, but nightly in the drawing-room of the Castle, and 'each evening the Queen had a gracious word for us.' Clara took both her harps to Balmoral, one for the concerts, the second for the drawing-room ; and there, one morning, Princess Beatrice came to play the piano with the younger sisters, reading the accompaniments at sight. She showed them some of the songs she had composed ; and for one of these, 'Retrospection,' Marianne and Clara subsequently wrote a harp,

violin and organ setting, and frequently performed it at charity concerts.

Intercourse with Princess Beatrice was resumed when they moved nine miles away to Glenmuick, at the close of their happy three weeks' stay—filled with walks, drives, picnics and after-dinner music-making. Lady Borthwick arranged a great evening of *tableaux vivants*—then a fashionable form of amateur entertainment—with incidental music. The 'frame' was lent by the Castle, and from the Castle came tenants and supper servants, as well as the principal dinner guests, Princess Beatrice, Prince Henry of Battenberg, the young Princess Henry of Prussia, and the Duchess of Albany, who talked in German to the Eissler sisters.

Guests who thoroughly enjoy themselves and who contribute to the entertainment of a house-party are always welcome; and the sisters were warmly invited to repeat their visit in the following autumn (1895). A command to play at Balmoral was also repeated, though this time they merely drove over from Glenmuick. Emmy, the pianist, was not with them, having had to take her mother to Switzerland; but Princess Beatrice proved to be an entirely efficient accompanist. They were astonished when the Queen congratulated them warmly on their 'great success in Vienna last January,' though they already knew from Lady Monson, then British Ambassador at Vienna, that it was to the Queen that they owed the recommendation which the Duke of Coburg had written on their behalf to Princess Metternich. 'Had it been possible to increase the devotion we felt for England,' this and the kind hospitality of the Monsons would have done it.

The following autumn there was a third visit to Glenmuick and a third command to play at Balmoral. That year Emmy was free to act as her sisters' accompanist, but

her part in the performance was insignificant, and when after the concert they were conducted to the Queen, she, with her usual modesty and self-effacement, felt herself unworthy to share the honour of a presentation, and remained quietly by the piano. The aged sovereign's reading vision was becoming dimmed, but few persons escaped the observation of her prominent bright blue eyes, and few actions her penetrating perception. When she rose to retire, aided by her Indian servant, she turned aside to the piano, and said in a low voice, and with her sweetest smile : 'This evening you have kept in the background, so I come to tell you how much I have enjoyed your music.' At supper souvenir brooches with the crown surmounting the date 1897 were brought to the sisters with a special message : 'The Queen thinks you might like to remember you played to her in the year of her Jubilee.'

The following year the younger sisters played again before the Queen. Tired with the London season, they were invited by General and Mrs. Somerset Gough to come to Woodlands Vale, Rye, for a rest. It was a musical household, one of the daughters being an excellent pianist, and Marianne and Clara enjoyed a little music in the evenings, but expected no professional work. But the Queen, according to a now stereotyped routine, was spending the summer at Osborne, in the residence which, more than any other, was filled with memories of her Prince Consort. Had he not reconstructed the house and planted the grounds ? And the loyal Misses Eissler desired to see those grounds. Their hostess applied for a permit and named her guests. The permit came, and with it an expression of the Queen's wish to hear them at Osborne as soon as her band arrived and matters could be arranged with Sir Walter Parratt, who was to be the conductor. So on the 10th of August Marianne

played the incomparable concerto of Mendelssohn with the orchestra, and Clara two harp *soli*, for one of which the Queen demanded an encore. They were rewarded a few days later by the photographs (signed) which the Queen reserved from reproduction, and a letter from the Dowager Lady Lytton which contained the treasured phrase : 'The Queen said again last night that you were both charming and that everybody liked you so much and your lovely music.'

Eight months later the Queen set foot on French soil for the fourth time since she and her Consort had paid their visit to the Third Napoleon and the Paris Exhibition. In the spring of 1889 she had gone to Biarritz ; in 1890 to Aix-les-Bains ; in 1892 to Costebelle. Now another spot on French Riviera was selected ; and a wing of a hotel *de luxe* at Cimiez above Nice formed a convenient residence for the Royal guest and her suite. Frau Eissler had also found the mists and damp of London insupportable ; the house in Redcliffe Square was abandoned ; and a legacy from Mr. Schwabe—ever a good friend to the three sisters and to all musicians—had enabled them to purchase a pretty little villa on the Californie hill at Cannes.

The district discovered by Lord Brougham was in its prime. The villa domains widely spread among its wooded hills were the resorts of rank, fashion, wealth and international culture. There was no Casino, no municipal supply of diversion. The *tempo* of social intercourse was relatively slow ; but quiet hospitality abounded. There were music lovers and gatherings for music, notably at Lord Rendel's winter home, Château Thorence ; and the Eissler sisters were quickly recognised as valuable additions to the community. At Nice Princess Beatrice heard of their activities

and—always quick to procure the pleasure of music for her mother—arranged that the sisters should come over to Cimiez to play in the Queen's drawing-room.

To-day a car or motor-bus takes us from Cannes to Nice for an evening's amusement ; then, rooms had to be engaged in the hotel for the night. And that April night happened to be one of unmitigated showers. Ruefully the sisters envisaged a walk through the dripping garden from the main entrance of the hotel to the Queen's private wing. But Her Majesty had also had an eye on the unpropitious weather. The Eisslers were donning their wraps when a message reached them that the Queen had ordered a door between their *étage* and her own apartment to be unsealed, so that they might pass, without a wetting or fatigue, directly into her drawing-room. She welcomed them with a smile, and when Clara seated herself at the harp called from her seat : 'I am so pleased to hear you play again.' The programme finished, she asked them to give her as an extra the *Preislied* from the *Meistersingers*, arranged as a duet for harp and violin. Then she spoke to them of their new home, saying she knew the villa must be close to the church of St. George, erected in memory of Prince Leopold. Next morning they were again presented with brooches as souvenirs of the evening.

It was the last time they played to the aged, music-loving Queen, though they saw her once again the following season, when they received an invitation to the Buckingham Palace Garden Party.

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The Eisslers' relations with contemporary musicians could only be dealt with adequately in a separate article, and must be very briefly epitomised.

Early in her career Marianne toured with Antoinette

Sterling, and at concerts, public and private, they associated with Albani, Santley, Edward Lloyd and Foli. Among organists they knew Dr. Stainer, who greatly admired them, Sir Walter Parratt, whom they met at Osborne, and Sir Frederick Bridges, who asked the younger sisters to perform for him at a recital in Westminster Abbey.

They worked under several distinguished conductors : Sir Frederic Cowan, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Sir Arthur Sullivan (for whose popular song, 'The Lost Chord,' Marianne once played a violin and Clara a harp obbligato at a charity concert given by Sir Charles and Lady Du Cane), and William Ganz, with whom, as Patti's accompanist, they were intimate.

One of the first persons to come for music and conversation to their house in Redcliffe Square was the renowned conductor of Wagner Opera, Gustave Mahler. Herr von Dulong, the tenor, would come and sing to them, Willeburg, the violinist, would play with Marianne, and Popper, the 'cellist, was ready to play his own instrument or the piano, as required. Of Popper they retain one absurd memory. After dining with them one evening, he determined, in a fit of economy, to return to the Langham Hotel by Underground. Unfortunately he did not grasp where he was to alight, and after sitting in his third-class carriage for a long period, he found himself at a station he recognised. It was that from which he had started : from which he judged it safer, after all, to take a cab.

Both Popper and Willeburg were cheerful souls, and kept the Christmas house parties at Craig-y-nos, Patti's Welsh home, in a state of perpetual merriment.

Great part of the Eissler MS. is filled with recollections of Patti and with letters from her, which are always signed 'Your loving Auntie.' Early in their career they toured

with her, and acquaintance thus formed ripened into affectionate intimacy. The famous singer lavished on her young friends both hospitality and gifts, among them a 'Tourte' bow, which Marianne used with the 'Bergonzi' violin presented to her by London admirers.

Clara rejoiced when she was able to do her 'Loving Auntie' a signal service. Patti, as Signora Niccolini, besought her to discover wherein she had offended the Queen, who no longer commanded her appearance at Windsor. Clara knew that Her Majesty's rigid abhorrence of divorce was the only reason for the ban, and courageously started on an attempt to restore her friend to favour.

Tactfully she instilled into the ears of the Queen's *entourage* her version of the case. Not sexual irregularities, but the gambling habits of the Marquis de Caux had caused the singer's divorce from her first husband. She had borne patiently his absorption of her earnings, till a day came when he suppressed a telegram announcing the death of her father, in order that she might not cancel her evening's engagement and lose the remuneration he had already staked upon the *tapis vert*. Patti could not forgive this outrage on filial piety, and Clara knew that its recital would arouse the Queen's indignation. She further represented that Patti's meeting with an honourable man who cherished and protected her was subsequent, not anterior, to the breach with the Marquis de Caux; that the pair enjoyed complete domestic happiness; that the Diva was an excellent stepmother and châtelaine, a friend to the poor around her and a patroness and promoter of numerous philanthropic undertakings. Clara's own character made her an unimpeachable witness, and the Queen had a penchant for the little harpist. Before long Patti received a command to sing at Windsor—with the proviso that Mr. Niccolini was not to accompany her. She

went ; she sang ; she conquered. Her Majesty commended the Diva in significant terms : ‘ How beautifully you sang the aria from *Tannhäuser*, and how well you pronounced the German.’

The encomium was well deserved ; for the Italian singer had struggled valiantly with the German tongue. In 1894 she had written to Marianne : ‘ To pronounce “ Allmacht-ge Jungfrau ” and “ Wurd-ge Magd ” is terrible ! My tongue hurts me for several hours after singing . . . I am sure if Wagner had known how delicately I always treated myself and my singing he would have been less cruel.’

## (3)

The sisters’ activities in England may be divided into two classes—those which brought them financial remuneration and those which were gratuitous. In the first category were pupils—of which the harpist had the largest number—and concerts, public and private. In those spacious days, before rank and wealth betook themselves to luxury flats, and the servant problem—which even more potently than death duties has transformed the structure of society—was non-existent, musical hostesses entertained lavishly and regularly during the London season. Mrs. Ronald, herself a fine vocalist, gave Sunday afternoons at 7 Cadogan Place ; in Piccadilly Sir Algernon and Lady Borthwick held weekly receptions, and Lady Goldsmid had Friday evenings ; Baron and Baroness de Reuter gave immense parties at 18 Kensington Palace Gardens ; Mrs. George Coats (Lady Glentanar), to whose talented daughter the Eisslers gave lessons, held similar entertainments in Park Lane ; while Mr. and Mrs. Schwabe had small gatherings on Sunday evenings. The fee given by them to performers was only the guinea which would have been earned for a lesson ; but the sisters delighted

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in these intimate collections of really musical people, and learned to know and love their hosts, to whom in later years they were indebted in various ways, and finally for a legacy enabling them to purchase their villa in Cannes.

These private concerts had the further advantage of enabling them to hear some of the most famous vocalists and instrumentalists of their day, and of bringing them into contact with celebrities of all descriptions : ecclesiastics, actors, men of science and painters, among whom Sir Edward Poynter became a special friend.

Of private concerts in the provinces the Eissler MS. contains a long list. Almost the first for which they were engaged was one given by Lady Anthony de Rothschild, which carried with it, in those pre-motor days, an invitation to stay the night. Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone were guests at Aston Clinton on this occasion, and the sisters naïvely regret that they 'had not as yet sufficient knowledge of English to follow the conversation' of the G.O.M. His daughter-in-law, Lady Gladstone of Hawarden, a gifted amateur violinist, was subsequently to become their very good friend, as was Lady de Rothschild's daughter, Lady Elliot Yorke.

Another notable evening was that of a concert in the Library at Blenheim given by the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough in honour of the then Prince and Princess of Wales, which included an invitation to stay in the Palace.

The innumerable Charity Concerts for which the younger sisters gave their services—especially during the Boer War—and their visits to country houses, while they brought no grist to the mill, did greatly enrich their minds and memories. They brought them into close contact with all that was best and most typical in the life of our 'Upper Ten Thousand' ; and, moreover, enabled them to see some of the loveliest

spots in Scotland and rural England, and to view at leisure the interiors of historic houses. Thus at Apsley House they were shown Wellington relics and dined at a table decorated with the gold and silver ornaments presented by the Portuguese to the Iron Duke. At Maiden Bradley they revelled in the lovely gardens, accompanied the Duchess of Somerset when she sang Scotch songs, and were driven about the country in the Duke's four-in-hand. At Duncraig Castle on the west coast of Scotland they saw a new type of scenery, and met, among other notabilities, the Maharajah Gaekwar of Baroda, who tried to persuade Clara to visit him in Baroda and give lessons on the harp to Indian ladies. At Witley Court they were interested in the treasures and curiosities brought home by Lord Dudley from many lands. At Glamis they were lodged in 'Prince Charlie's rooms.' At Vaynol they were introduced to the menagerie of Mr. Assheton-Smith, who preferred the roaring of his wild beasts to the music of his wife and her friends.

At these and many other historic country houses they were of course expected, in return for hospitality, to contribute to the after-dinner diversions of the house-party ; but it must be noted that the contribution, if superior in quality, was not different in kind from that of non-professional guests or, often, hostesses and their daughters. Their narrative, in fact, like that of other memoirs of the time (notably those of Lady Radnor, conductor of what was termed '*The Countess's Orchestra*'), conveys the impression that Victorian England was far more music-loving than is the England of to-day. The despised 'accomplishments' of our grandmothers did, in fact, produce not only a small number of fine amateur instrumentalists and vocalists, but also a large number of appreciative listeners. For if practice does not always 'make perfect,' it does create, as nothing else can do,

a sense of the difficulties overcome, and the various renderings given, by great artists.

Could the Eissler sisters renew their youth and return to this country of their adoption, they would find half their occupation gone, and would be heard in its 'Stately Homes' only if they received the favour of a 'broadcast,' or a gramophone record were made of one of their public performances.

The fateful August of 1914 found the Eisslers in a cottage at Ballater they had rented for the summer. A return to Cannes was impossible; and though the damp of English winters proved fatal to their aged mother, they would be the first to acknowledge that nowhere in Europe could they have spent the War years with less discomfort than among their influential and sympathetic British friends.

After five long years they returned to Villa Morava, to an altered Cannes, and to straitened financial circumstances. Unlike many artists, they had always been frugal; but the savings of their palmy days, invested in Austria, vanished with the collapse of the Central Empires, while the capital sunk in their little property in France at a time of soaring prices could not be realised in the general slump of land values.

Yet as they sit in the shabby rooms of a villa too large for their present needs, surrounded with souvenirs of their former prosperity and friendships, they would, I think, dispute the Poet's aphorism that

*'Sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier days.'*

*WOMAN OF THE SIDHE.*

BY L. STEWART BOYD.

BIG IAIN was a very old man : so old that there was no work for him in the boats or at the nets. He had nothing to do all day but sit alone on the cliff-top, feeling the sea wind on his face. Sometimes, sitting there, he slept and dreamed : sometimes, when the wind and the booming surf stirred him out of his dreams, he wakened to stare serenely away beyond the rocks of Colgarra to the misty Sea of the Hebrides.

There he could see his kinsmen riding the grey waves in little boats. They were all kin on Colgarra and he knew all the boats as well as he knew the men in them. He watched the pleasure steamers too, recognising and remembering them by small differences of detail which his keen eyes noted as they glided gracefully past the island, their red funnels belching smoke, their paint and brass making a splendid shine and on their decks the outlanders shivering under the bitter wind that always rakes the Hebridean seas.

There are many little islands of the Hebrides, scores of little islands freckling the forlorn mists with glints of black and green. Like dark jewels they glimmer on the breast of that haunted sea and in and out among them the steamers thread a pleasurable path all through the summer. For many summers since he had become too old to work, Big Iain watched them pass. They always passed Colgarra. He could not remember ever seeing a tourist on the island.

For Colgarra was neither beautiful nor romantic. It was a bleak compound of rocks and rain, mist, peat and a few fisher families. From the sea it looked insignificant, and

out beyond its sea-bitten cliffs a ring of reefs, always covered with a fret of white water, kept the big ships at a respectful distance. The reefs guarded Colgarra from civilisation. Behind them the island was inaccessible, a fortress that had unconsciously defied invasion : the Norsemen had passed it by and the English, and now there would never be a harbour for boats or hotels or golf or any other wonders of civilisation.

But the islanders scarcely realised what they were missing. They never went over to the mainland. The men were all fishers : the women worked the crofts and sat behind their spinning-wheels in the evenings : and the children went to the school where the minister's wife turned herself into teacher. The minister was himself a son of Colgarra. He was born in one of the poorest crofts, and because he had come back Colgarra loved him. There were others who had gone away. But they never came back, and for that the islanders were resentful and suspicious of the mainland folk. They did not want strangers. The mail steamer passing and stopping once a week out beyond the reefs stopped near enough for them.

It was Donald's boat that was Colgarra's link with the world. Regularly his small craft slipped across the white water and came bobbing against the steamer's side. Then bundles were tossed down to him from the hold and he grinned and passed a word with the deck-hands while the bundles were coming down. But he had never actually set foot on any of the steamers or spoken to the outland passengers who looked at him and his boat from the high decks above the hold.

Usually he went alone. But the day after the big storm the sea was running high and the surf around the rocks was stronger than the strength of one man's arms : so Donald

took Seamas, his friend, with him on the boat and gave him an oar.

Seamas and Donald had always been friends. There were no friends on the island like them : yet they quarrelled and fought constantly. From their cradles they had thrashed each other over almost every cause in the world, but except to cuff them apart the fishermen did not interfere in their quarrels, for it was known that the two were better than brothers and their quarrels were only the sparks raised by Seamas's fiery temperament striking against the cold iron of Donald's nature.

Big Iain drowsing in the sun was proud of them both. They were fine lads, fine fishermen, like the rest of their kin : and he was thinking they would soon be men, no longer young cubs clawing each other in play but grand men in the flower of their youth. The old man savoured a pagan pleasure keen as the wind in contemplating the splendour of youth.

The storm-raised waves were running high. They undulated sullenly towards the reefs, there breaking to foam in sudden white anger along the black teeth of the cliffs. The spray of their breaking spattered old Iain's face. That wakened him fully. He bent his blank eyes down serenely upon the fighting waves. Down there, riding the hills and valleys of the sea, Seamas and Donald were skimming towards the steamer that waited for them far out, a splendid alien insolent thing in the greyness of the sea.

Once he used to ride the waves like that in a frail shell of a boat. But he was too old for the oars now, too feeble in the arms to be wanted in the boats by the strong young rowers. He sighed with the weary patience of age. He was only waiting for his death to come on him, and now he remembered that in heaven there would be no more sea.

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That was the thought he sighed over. He did not know how he would be getting along in heaven without the sea.

'The Lord knows best,' he muttered dubiously into his beard. 'But I will need to ask the minister about that.'

Then he forgot heaven and sat stiffly staring out at the steamer. The little boat was turning back to Colgarra. But now it had three figures in it, not two as there should have been but three, and the third, from the yellow shine of her hair, was surely a woman. Surprise held Iain, so that at first it did not occur to him to go and tell the folks. But presently he recovered himself and, rising, he went along the cliffs to spread the news.

'Ho, there's a woman coming ashore. A woman in Donald's boat.'

They came out of their cottages to see for themselves. They gathered in a shy group along the cliff, shading their eyes with their hands and talking to one another in guttural monosyllables. There was no doubt about it. Donald was bringing over a woman, sure enough. They could see the sun in her hair and the white flutter of her garments.

Wanda Fayre was bound for Colgarra. Why, she did not quite know. She was like that, did things and went places on the spur of the moment because it was much better fun living that way. And anyway, she was Wanda Fayre. The Wanda Fayre. It was enough that she saw Colgarra, black, forbidding and ringed perilously with reefs : and the polite officer on the steamer said no one went there : and the sun was glittering on Seamas's red hair, and Donald's handsome face was dark and sullen. Back in town she had spoken casually of buying an island, one of those little romantic Hebridean islands where one could get right away from everything. She was not sure yet whether she meant it or not, but it was publicity, so there was no harm in looking

at Colgarra and considering it. Again, the film value of the scene occurred to her. Another Man of Aran location this. And those big uncouth lads. She saw herself in a flash starring in a kind of picture new to her. It was all remote and nebulous in her mind. She did not really know why she had her luggage sent over the side and followed it into the little boat. But she was Wanda Fayre. She was expected to do things like that.

Seamas and Donald rowed her to the shore. They flickered uneasy glances at each other, and in a sudden terrible shyness kept their eyes averted from her. They were confused and troubled by her richness and beauty. Her hair was different from any hair they had seen. It lay close against her head in miraculously even waves, each wave very tiny and regular like the corrugations left on the sand by the tide : and she had golden curls, also very tiny and numerous, so wonderfully arranged that Providence might have said she should have six little curls here and six just there. Moreover, her mouth was red, not ordinary red but the colour of freshly cut meat : and her fingers were tipped each nail with the same red. But for all that she was very desirable.

On the cliff-top Big Iain and the fisherfolk watched the boat come in. When they saw her closely, however, everyone, even Iain, slipped away back to the clachan. There they lurked mistrustfully at windows and doors, wishful to see more, yet leaving the cliff and the landing-place bare. As they watched they talked among themselves. They could not remember such a thing happening before. Even Iain could not remember a precedent, and he was the oldest of them all. So they shook their heads again and said that maybe it would be best to leave Seamas and Donald to deal with the outlander since they had brought her over.

The young men beached the boat. Seamas carried their passenger through the shallow water and set her down. Then, only a little wet from the surf, she patted her hair into smoothness and laughed. The little tinkle of her laughter had a silver sound like small bells tinkling on an ascending note, and it had good box-office value. To Seamas and Donald, who had never been to the cinema, it was new and excellent music.

'I think I'll stay here a day or two,' she said. 'Tell me, where is the best boarding-house, for I hear there isn't an hotel ?'

They looked at her and floundered in the sea of her charm. They looked at her mouth, that raw wound, and her hands that also were tipped the colour of blood.

'A boarding-house ?' Seamas said, mutilating the word. He shot a glance at Donald, the intelligent one, but Donald's blue eyes were blank. The word was new to both, but they suspected that they would not have that sort of house on Colgarra, where the ancient cottages were all alike all over the place, sheltering hens and cows as well as humans.

'A house to stay in,' said Wanda patiently.

Light broke upon Seamas. He stammered, 'Oh yes. If you would be waiting here a minute—'

Wanda Fayre smiled. Gathering her sea-spattered coat round her, she seated herself on her luggage. She began to hum a little tune, one of her own theme songs which had become so popular since she sang it that one heard it everywhere now and all the time. But she liked it.

The lads took another look at her. Then they went clattering up the cliff-path to the clachan.

'I will ask my father to bid her to our house,' said Seamas.

Donald shook his head. 'Don't be troubling your parents. Mine would be pleased to invite her.'

'It's no trouble at all. And anyway, it was myself she asked.'

'You? That's a lie.'

'A lie, you said?'

'Ay.'

'Ah.' Seamas halted on the path and took off his coat. Donald did likewise, and without more words they settled down to fight in furious silence.

Presently Wanda wearied of sitting alone. From the steamer's deck the island had looked romantic; but the beach was bare and desolate, and the sea even more desolate now that the steamer had slipped away into the mists. And the wind was cold and she was feeling hungry.

Leaving her luggage, she walked up the path the lads had taken. Round the corner she came upon them. They were rolling over and over on the stones, pummelling each other: almost to her feet they rolled, but they were too busy to see her. She stood for a minute watching them and still they did not know she was there: then she walked on to the clachan. There, without any trouble, she got herself invited to stay with the minister's wife.

The fishermen came and dragged Seamas and Donald apart. Held by the hard hands of their kinsmen, they stood glowering. Released, they walked off in opposite directions, and thoughtful glances followed them. It was nothing unusual that the two lads should fight, but before they had always fought themselves back into friendship.

Now it seemed that something had come upon the boys. The fishermen did not like it. It was strange that their new mood coincided with the coming of the outlander to Colgarra. The thoughtful glances turned from Seamas and Donald and sought the grey walls of the minister's house, but no one spoke and their thoughts remained

unuttered. Yet, later, in the clachan there was some uneasy talking.

In the minister's house Wanda Fayre was welcomed, for the minister was ill and his wife, a gaunt woman from a Free Kirk manse on the mainland, cherished a secret hunger for the refinements of civilisation. She was glad to have a visitor. She took Wanda walking round the island and Wanda uttered little delighted exclamations at the glimpses she got of a primitive people. But they were only glimpses, nothing more. Courteously, with such subtle courtesy that she knew nothing of it, the clachan folk kept her and the minister's wife beyond their thresholds. They manoeuvred so that her shadow did not fall across their doors. And the minister's wife noticed that an unusual number of the women and children were not at home.

'They are a shy people,' she explained to Wanda.

'But so sweet,' said Miss Fayre, smiling radiantly.

In sunshine alternating with misty rain the day passed uneventfully. There was a quietness in the clachan. The quietness was in the air and in the cottages : almost it could be felt like the quiet before a big storm breaks. It was as though a storm was coming over Colgarra and yet the sea ran no higher than before and no storm signs gathered on the horizon.

The fisherfolk waited for it, holding Seamas and Donald in leash. The lads wanted to fight out their quarrel and now there had to be someone always stepping between them to keep the peace. But for the first time their kinsmen would not let them fight. It would be unlucky.

For there was that dark foreboding in the air and that sense of waiting. Everybody knew that if a hare runs across a man's path there will be a death soon : and that a man should burn his nets and his gear if a woman has stepped

over them because never will he catch fish with those nets again. Likewise everyone knew that the outlander woman brought an omen of blood to Colgarra. There it was on her mouth and her fingers for anyone to see. Blood. Even a babe in the cradle would see the woman brought ill luck with her.

The first of it had lighted already on Seamas and Donald because they brought her over : and if they fought now their friendship would be over for ever. That the islanders knew, and it put sorrow on them, for they liked the lads and they liked peace.

Up in the grey manse the minister's wife sensed a little of the clachan's mood.

'It is a pity Seamas and Donald have quarrelled,' she said uneasily.

Wanda raised her delicate eyebrows. 'Have they quarrelled ?' she asked.

She knew they had. She had seen them rolling over and over on the stones. In a way it was exciting.

'So delightfully primitive,' she said vaguely.

A clamorous wind sweeping in from the sea at dusk shook the windows. Above the wind the surf growled like an animal, the menace of the sound warring with the high scream of the wind. The minister's wife drew the curtains and put more wood on the fire. But she could not shut out the sound of the wind and the sea or make pleasant the sombre look of the island as it crouched naked under the night mists.

For a moment she was afraid of Colgarra and the sea, as she had been afraid years ago when she first came to the island. As then, she wondered what was in the islanders' minds, what their real thoughts were, those they kept hidden from her behind the impenetrable walls of reserve they raised

against all incomers. She did not know. She had never known, for she was not a Colgarra woman. The minister would have known : but he was ill.

In her sudden uneasiness she drew closer to Wanda Fayre, who could not understand either : then she felt safe and civilised again.

Down in the clachan the fisherfolk were talking deep-throated Gaelic over their fires. There, too, the sea raised a bitter howling, but the clachan folk were born with that sound in their ears ; it was so familiar that they did not even hear it except in times of storm, and then the old wives drew in closer to the red peats, muttering that the lost ones of the sea were fighting out there in the dark.

'It is a pity about Seamas and Donald,' one said.

A fisherman made a contemptuous noise in his throat. 'Tcha,' he said. 'What is come over their fathers that they haven't put an end to the matter with belts ?'

'Ay.' The first man shook his head. 'But would a belting rid them of the bad luck the foreign woman has put on them ?'

An inarticulate murmur stirred through the hard-faced talkers and passed like the smoke of the peat, leaving a heavy silence. In the silence they began to rise and slip away into their own houses, closing the doors behind them, and the sound of the wind sank to a sobbing, a womanish sobbing that was distressful to hear.

In the morning when Wanda walked through the clachan, women who saw her made furtive signs with their fingers. She did not notice that, nor was the minister's wife allowed to see the precautionary gestures, for the clachan folk remembered all at once that she was only a foreign woman herself when all was said and done. They had had a word with her already. And she said that a red-painted mouth and

red finger-tips meant nothing at all on the mainland, where it was a fashion, nothing else.

She spoke absently with her mind on other things, for she was a busy woman and the minister's illness had put a lot of work on her. The villagers listened courteously to her. She got again the hopeless feeling that in their courtesy they were walling themselves off from her and she could not understand it.

'The cow of old Ceit has died on her,' a woman said abruptly.

'Of old age probably,' she smiled.

'No doubt. And last night the thatch of my house caught fire. Never has it caught fire before. I would like a word with the minister,' the woman said.

The gaunt lady of the manse raised her eyebrows. 'But you know the minister is ailing.'

'Ah.' The woman turned away. 'One hopes he will recover.'

The minister's wife was busy with many calls to make. Wanda Fayre left her and walked on alone to seek Big Iain on the cliff-top. She liked Iain. He was so big and old and gentle, and unlike the others he would stay and let her talk to him : and always he bore himself with unconscious pride, as if he were an ancient king sitting on a throne of rocks. The wind took her thin dress and tugged at it with urgency. Along the cliffs the sea was chanting a terrible psalm of conflict.

Big Iain listened to the sea and looked at Wanda thoughtfully.

'Old Ceit's cow has died on her,' he said.

She thought he was so old he must be a little mad. To cover up her thought she smiled.

'I'm sorry about the cow,' she said.

'Ay ?'

He stared at her fingers. He was thinking that in his father's time they would have known how to deal with this. He thought of what his father would have done : put the unlucky one in a small boat perhaps, and turned her away from the island to drift or to sink under the grey waves. In the labyrinths of his aged mind he mused on the thought. But one could not do these things now. So he sat still and listened in courteous silence to her talking. But suddenly something ominous in his silence penetrated to her mind and she felt the wind cold on her skin : and the chanting of the sea became too loud for her voice. She was afraid. But she could see nothing to fear. The old man was senile. Keeping his fingers crossed like that was a senile trick he had : that was all.

That night in the clachan a cry arose and there was a flurry of women suddenly roused from sleep. A child was taken with convulsions. The child did not die, though for the first time the villagers did not call in the minister's wife who was skilled in nursing. Instead they turned to an old wise woman of their own, a bleared crone nearly as old as Big Iain. They watched her while by crude treatment she brought the child back to quiet breathing.

Then, sobbing, the young mother took her baby back in her arms. But the wise woman hobbled away shaking her head.

'Maybe the child should have died,' she muttered. 'For there will have to be death yet—and a babe is only a babe.'

She went spreading her thought to the others and they listened, big men and hard women turning pale like children frightened of the dark. They feared nothing except witches and omens and the drowned souls of the evil ones who came up out of the sea at night. In these things they believed

implicitly and their belief was older than the faith behind the minister. So the young mother was the only one who was not half-sorry that the child had lived. The others circled their thoughts round Seamas and Donald. It looked black for them, poor lads : for they were in love with a woman of the Sidhe.

The morning wakened clear and bright with a gay wind that frolicked over the dun moors and the rocks that stabbed the island's thin soil. The fishers' cottages were grey in the sun : too old and grey to be brightened even by the summer sunshine : and the women of the cottages were grey too, and shadowy in their drab petticoats and enveloping plaids.

There were no men about when Wanda walked down to the beach. Most of them were out with the boats. The muddy paths through the clachan were quiet as she went unaware to put a light to the smouldering rivalry between Donald and Seamas : and nobody knew what was happening, least of all Wanda. She had only expressed a desire to go out in one of the little boats : and Seamas, the quick one, was there ready to take her. Donald was not so quick. He was left behind, sulking.

Big Iain met the red-headed lad near the beach.

' Does your father know about the boat ? ' said Iain ; for it was the only engined boat on Colgarra and Seamas's father valued it highly.

' He knows,' Seamas said.

His fair skin turned dull crimson and old Iain nodded shrewdly. He suspected that the boat would be going out in secret. He went along the shore, nodding his head and muttering to himself, till he came upon Donald moving stealthily near the boat-house. Infatuation had that day turned Donald very pale, not lobster red like Seamas. But it took them both ways and both were the foolishness

of youth. Iain said nothing. He took Donald's arm and they walked up the cliff-path to the old man's favourite seat.

'Are ye sick, Donald?' he said.

'No.'

'Ah,' said Iain, and smoked his pipe and took a look at the sea. It was a wild view he got from the cliff-edge : black rocks below, the Sea of the Hebrides beyond, and between a creaming surf that swirled over the hidden reefs. Donald with his sick look was whistling softly to himself an air about a seal woman who married a fisherman. It was a very old song. Iain had heard it crooned when he was in his cradle.

'Are ye up to a trick, Donald?' he said softly.

The boy stopped whistling. He turned his eyes from the reefs. He was looking ill, as if he had been eating green apples.

'He will have to swim home,' he said strangely. 'Seamas I mean. If he ever gets home. I am hoping he does not.'

'What have ye done, Donald?'

Donald put his hand on the old man's arm. His hand was shaking. Iain could feel it shaking and the trembling hand angered him. He thrust it off his arm roughly.

'Look,' said Donald, pointing to the sea.

Seamas and his motor-boat rounded the cliffs, skimming in a wide sweep to keep clear of the black-toothed rocks. The end of his wide half-circle would take him to the landing beach where Wanda would be waiting. Iain narrowed his pale eyes, watching the boat. At first when he saw it its course was steady. But now it limped and sidled in the water : then it stopped and went drifting aimlessly on the waves.

In the uncertain sunlight Seamas's hair glittered as he

moved to the engine. Against the white of the surf and the grey of the sea his hair was distinct like a little beacon burning. Iain watched. Donald stood stiff and miserable beside him. They could see the red-headed boy bending over the engine, working at it as coolly as though he were in the boat-house on the beach.

'Why doesn't he swim for it?' Donald exclaimed.

Big Iain spat. 'He would lose the boat.'

'But he will have to swim now. Doesn't he know it, the fool?'

'He will not, though,' said Iain with certainty.

'Why not?'

'Och, boy. Wouldn't his old one belt him if he lost the boat? It is the only one we have, that.'

Donald shuffled his feet uneasily in the scanty grass.

'He is drifting fast,' he said. 'The tide-race will get him if he will not swim.'

'Well. And isn't that what ye wanted?' Big Iain asked him softly.

'Ay.'

The boy's voice rose in a tormented cry. It came back on the wind, the monosyllable long drawn out as if it streamed behind him as he turned and ran down the cliff-path. He ran in long loping strides to the boats on the beach and began pushing one out into the water. He splashed after it, swinging himself inboard. Big Iain sat down again on the cliff. He was thinking that Donald with his strong young arms should reach the motor-boat before it was in real danger from the tide-race. That was the terror of Colgarra, the tide-race that swept round from the sea and eddied between the reefs. In it no man could swim and no boat could live. But Donald knew what he was about. Iain took up his pipe and sucked at it serenely.

He could see Donald's boat skimming alongside Seamas. The two boats were together, the lads standing in them, and Donald moved to take the crippled boat in tow. But Seamas would not be saved. Crimson-faced, he stood and raged at Donald. He waved his fists. Now they would be fighting. They were mad : up on the cliff Big Iain clicked his tongue over their madness. Then, muttering, he laid aside his pipe. For Seamas's fist shot out, catching Donald squarely on the mouth, and Donald swayed under the blow overboard into the sea.

'Bad, bad,' Iain muttered.

He waited for Donald to come up again. Seamas waited too ; but he did not come up, and Seamas dived like a seal into the grey water after him.

To Iain it seemed they stayed down a long time, longer than he liked. And then he remembered about the foreign woman and how they had said from the first it was the lads she would take ; for had she not put her hands on them, she the unlucky one with the red of blood on her finger-tips ? Then for him the familiar sea took on a look of horror and the heaving breast of it was dark with foreboding.

Iain, still muttering, hobbled down to the beach and bent stiffly to put out a boat. He took up the oars and sent the boat skimming through a smother of white water. It was a long time since he had rowed out to the reefs. The young men said he was old and that was the truth, but the noise of the reefs, a hungry sound, was in his ears, making him remember that in his day he had been a fine boatman, and the years were slipping away from him at the feel of the water against the oars.

He leaned back as the sea lifted his boat high. Up on the crest of a wave he peered through the spray, searching the sea ahead. The two boats had disappeared. He could

see nothing but water. Then he slipped down into a valley between two waves. Spray drenched him and the creaming sea poured across his outstretched legs. His heart was beating hard. He was aware of the labouring thud of it against his ribs as he pulled the boat up against the tide.

Rising again, he could see Seamas's red head. He had Donald : he was swimming strongly with Donald close to him. Towards them Iain oared in among the reefs where speed and strength did not matter any more and only skill would keep a boat afloat. He used to be good at negotiating the reefs. But he was old now and his skill was broken up by the weakness of his body. He sighed angrily over his own weakness. But at the same time he edged the boat farther in.

There between the reefs the water twisted and swirled. It was a silent twisting, more ominous than all the clamorous surf beyond. Far into that water a boat had never gone except as wreckage reeling on and down to a final battering against the rocks. In the old days it had been a good game for the young men to play, this venturing near the place of whirlpools : but it was no game for an old man.

Suddenly the snaking water took his boat and flung it far past the two heads in the water. Iain shot back with a powerful sweep of the oars and all his body trembled. He could not do that again : not that mighty sweep of muscles tautened against the sea. He knew he could not do it again. It was the first and last echo of his vanished youth. Quavering, he called to Seamas to be quick and grasp the bow of the boat and Seamas caught hold. He crawled inboard, helping Donald over. They dropped together and squatted a moment, getting their breath back, and the old man, glowering at them and panting, gave them the moment. Then he kicked at them with his heavy boots.

'Listen,' he said bitterly, 'we will put an end to this to-day.'

Then he gave them the oars. They took the oars and Iain, released from rowing, slipped back in his seat. He drooped a little, seeming to become smaller, until he was a huddle of wet garments and no more. A wave slopped over the boat, drenching his drooped body. He did not move. The lads rowed on with their backs turned to him. Later when they beached the boat and went respectfully to help him out, he did not move, and they saw that for him there would be no more sea.

A swift shower of rain darkened the sunshine. Under the rain Colgarra lay grey and black, very silent even around the clachan while the villagers debated what they should do. Presently, in the silence a band of fishermen and their women gathered on the strip of moor behind the clachan and walked up to the minister's house. There, outside the house, Wanda Fayre was standing. She smiled uncertainly when they came on her, but the smile faded as a murmur, very quiet and sullen, rose up from them. She caught only the menacing sound of it, not the Gaelic which she did not understand. But she was afraid. She turned suddenly to go. Then they picked up stones from the moor and flung them and she ran.

In the minister's house, sobbing, she found shelter. But the fisherfolk swarmed up to the house and an old man pushed open the door. Behind him the others crowded into the neat grey house, apparently not angry, silent, making no noise but the clatter of their heavy boots on the floor. They moved together with the certainty of an inflowing sea. But the minister heard them and came down, leaning on his wife's arm. They drew back from him again like

water receding, until they were all outside again in the rain. Then he closed the door and put his back against it.

Seamas's red-bearded father stepped forward.

'It is written down,' he said reproachfully, 'that ye shall not suffer a witch to live.'

'There are no witches,' the minister told him.

Red Seamas shook his head with respect and reproach.

'It is in The Book,' he said.

The minister sighed. 'Ah, well, Red Seamas. I will know what to do.'

He would know what to do. Seadh ! He had education and he was the minister. In twos and threes, as quietly as they had come, the fisherfolk slipped away back to the clachan. There, in their houses, they watched the rain and waited for something to happen : and an hour went by, then another.

Then, with the minister and his wife beside her, Wanda walked down to the beach, and it was observed that though she was still very beautiful, her mouth was coloured a natural pale red and her finger-tips were as white as they had been when she was born. All her luggage came behind her. It was piled into a little boat and the minister handed her in after it : then, as a tourist steamer glided into sight out of the mist, Seamas's father rowed her out over the surf.

Up on the cliff the fishers watched her go. The wind whipped back their sombre clothes and beat against their dark faces : grouped there, they stood patiently against the wind until they saw her taken up by the steamer. Then they relaxed and the breath of a sigh passed over them : and Wanda in the steamer sighed too, with relief that she had not after all bought herself an island, because she really could not understand those people . . . and it was a pity, because

really they seemed so sweet, so charmingly primitive, and then to attack her for no reason whatever . . .

The steamer took her away from Colgarra, the first and last tourist to land there. But Seamas and Donald did not see her go. They were busy down on the far beach mending a boat together.

#### SONG OF THE TROLLS.

*We are the wind, and we are the swift, grey rain.  
We sing the songs of water ; the dreams we dream  
Are the rippling thoughts of the heavy, secret boughs  
Shaking a light of leaves down the smooth-voiced stream.*

*Our hair waves under the wind with the wild green grass,  
And flowers that come are the laughter of the trolls  
Where the soft light glows in the earth like a film of moss  
As, laughing, we pause, while the circling echo rolls.*

*We have forgotten the sun, but the moon is ours ;  
She makes faint music, thin as a silver horn,  
And we lie and listen, and say no word till it dies  
In a tremble of beauty, swooning under the dawn.*

*We are the depths of woods, where the light is dim,  
And the lonely traveller halts with startled eyes.  
And we are the wide, high light on the moors, and the seas  
Of murmuring fern dark against half-lit skies.*

*Swinging on winds, and pulsing in thunder drops  
Loud on the leaves ; asleep in the frozen stream ;  
Curling in earth like roots, and ageless as they ;  
Thus, thus are we ; and ours is an endless dream.*

MARJORIE STANNARD.

## BIRDS ON A DEVON ESTUARY.

BY G. B. GOOCH.

## I.

THE stream that flows past my window is for ever taking our thoughts to the distant sea. In the spring when the curlew, flying back to nest among the hills, brings us tidings from the shore, every first seen swallow, martin, wood-wren or whitethroat—and hosts beside—turn one's thoughts to far-off seas and foreign lands. But though the stream still hurries to the coast, the birds after their long journey bid us stay. And so it comes about that the stream's insistent call falls on deaf ears during the warmer months. Indeed, at times it is drowned in the song of many birds. In the autumn, however, when many birds go south, it is heard again, gently at first but rising to a clarion call after the first September spate. Does the bird-watcher catch the spirit of unrest that sweeps through the feathered world at the summer's end? I think he does if he spends his days among the hills in a district veiled in cloud. Anyhow, when the sun shines dimly through a thick white mist that covers miles of moorland, and the stream roars past at our feet on its journey to the sea, we go to the coast if we can.

The coast for us means the river-mouth. What do we expect to find? In the first place the sun—reason enough to dodge the clouds that cap and clothe the hills. Then there are birds which in mid-winter transport one to a fairyland decked in bright colours and peopled with forms of life rare and strange to an inland dweller. How often, I wonder, have I not stood on the banks of our stream

and, looking out across the valley on a winter's day, seen in imagination flocks of birds banking and wheeling over acres of estuary mud. For the stream gives promise, if we would but follow, not of one bird or several, but of untold feathery legions. And does not one's joy in watching a single bird increase out of all proportion, when even a score appear? A flock is not merely an assembly of individuals—it is very much more than that. A small solitary bird may be likened to a drop of water on a leaf which, though exquisite, is still at the most but a jewel in a perfect setting, while the cloud from which it fell may transfigure a mountain. So it is with a flock of birds.

Leaving the rain-soaked uplands, where a raven croaks across an otherwise birdless waste, we feel like brigands descending from a stronghold to pillage rich lands near the coast, where even the clouds—as they seem from afar—are sometimes flying birds. But our weapons are binoculars, and when we return in the evening, climbing up until we are a thousand feet above the sea, our spoils are but the memories of the birds we have seen. Fleeing from a mist that is white, we have on occasions reached the coast only to find the estuary swathed in fog. I remember in particular one morning when it was just possible to see for half a mile in a ghostly world of grey. In utter silence the river seemed to wait the lifting of the mantle that held it in the grip of a gladiator's net. It was not a good beginning for a day in search of birds. Yet as things turned out, we could not have had a better.

Looking first towards an island in the river, we saw a crowd of cormorants standing about and drying their wings in the usual spread eagle fashion. So many in such a small space loomed black and large across the water in the haze. Actually we could not see the island, for it was completely

hidden by these extraordinary living gargoyles that accordingly seemed to stand in a group upon the water. A small flock of sheld-duck, swimming near them and twinkling black and white in the distance, gave us the only trace of light in the all-pervading gloom. On an ordinary day we should have seen the broad chestnut band across the white breast which, with the scarlet bill, makes this bird a quite astounding patch of colour on a winter's day, and a flock of several hundred flying overhead in bright sunshine an experience to remember for a lifetime. In the fog, however, it was pleasant to look at something that was neither black nor grey. Presently, beyond these birds, more black and white specks appeared, flying just above the water. Approaching swiftly, they were soon obviously geese, and Brent at that with their black necks and white sterns. Dropping down close to the island, which grew as the tide fell, they swam about waiting for standing room on the mud-bank. So strange was the light that they looked like duck very much nearer than they actually were. A moment later a solitary bird flew up, those already on the water greeting its arrival with the weird 'honk-honk' of a goose. This, and the deep laughing quack of the sheld-duck, provide a fitting background to the musical notes of the waders that flit over the mud-flats. On this day of fog, however, an almost unbroken silence expressed the feelings of birds and man.

Certain now of a successful day, for if no other birds appeared we could at least return to the geese, we walked on up the river towards a vast expanse of mud. Myriads of black dots covered its surface in a broad fringe that ran for nearly half a mile beside the river, every dot a bird, every bird a coot. Beyond this vast assembly water foamed white, we thought, over a submerged bank, but as we drew

nearer we saw that in reality we were looking at a flock of swans. Beyond the swans were coot again. We were beginning to realise the possibilities of this dim grey world, in which everything had so far combined to produce a gigantic woodcut in white and grey and black. Now the swans and the coot ahead promised us the best black and white picture of the day, but, as so often happens, the unexpected turned us from our path. Walking one moment eagerly towards the great white birds standing in the flock of coot, the next we had forgotten the swans and had stopped to look at the coot themselves. For, singly and in the mass, they gave us the most exquisite living woodcut I have ever seen, with their black bodies and white bills. Hitherto the black had been an ordinary black, the white the white of swans, but in the fog every coot seemed clad in deep black velvet. On the head, moreover, it looked as though it had been brushed up the wrong way, so that the head was not only blacker than the body but covered apparently in a little bristling busby of feathers. Here, against the very blackest part, gleamed a bill and frontal plate of the purest ivory white.

Numbers came close to us as we crouched behind a bush, to dip their fascinating bills into a runlet of water, to sip, throw back their heads and swallow. All the time there rose upon the air the soft splashy sound of myriads of muddy feet treading on estuarine ooze, and when we stood up and set hundreds running, this noise swelled to a roar. And yet we had disturbed but a fraction of those that were feeding here. Had they all started to run at the same moment, the sound would have been that of a landslide, as it is when an acre of roosting starlings is startled in the night. Apart from this continuous muddy murmur, the silence was complete save for the occasional unearthly yelp

of a curlew in the fog or the more familiar sound of a song-thrush cracking winkles.

To those who know the coot only in broad daylight and in small numbers, I despair of conveying any sort of impression of these birds feeding on the mud-flats in the fog. They reminded me of monstrous inky scarabs walking on their tails, and when an individual took to its wings, it strengthened this impression. For just as it was about to alight, it dropped its legs and began to move them at a frantic speed, so that on touching the ground the legs were moving at the right pace to carry it on at a run. Nor can I hope to express the beauty of the ivory bill in that light. On a bright day it loses half its charm. I watched a coot recently swimming amongst some reeds that only slightly softened the glare of a wintry sun. The bird came so close to me that it filled the whole field of my glass, yet it was not the bill on this occasion but the ruby eye and the velvet head that attracted my attention. I hardly noticed the bill at all. It was just an ordinary coot's bill as I had known it, or thought I had known it, all my life. In reality, I suppose, I have seen it only once, when my wife and I stood beside the river in the fog. Occasionally, of course, a bird is remembered above all others of its kind owing to a special combination of circumstances. The bird's plumage, the background against which it is seen, the observer's mood, these things and many others have the power of imprinting on the mind the living image of a wren, a wagtail, a couple of flycatchers or a drowsy flock of burnished teal. The ivory bills, however, did not exalt the coot in quite this way. I felt rather that on this foggy morning we had discovered a new expression on the familiar face of a common bird. Nor is there anything strange in that. It happens repeatedly if you watch and love wild

animals out of doors. But this new expression was so strangely beautiful that it was very hard to tear ourselves away. When at last we had done so and had walked a little way with many a backward glance, a vivid flash of blue rent the pearly-grey curtain of fog. It was a king-fisher, a messenger from a sunny world, but its breast was the colour of the sun seen through haze, dim and red.

## II.

Often, leaving Dartmoor in the rain, we reach the coast to find the sun shining brightly between clouds that here pass high overhead. A pleasant breeze adds movement to the sea, which on such a day is now glass-green, now deep blue, here perhaps grey and there quite brown where white waves break on a sandy shore. Returning in the evening, we take with us a whole new seascape of delights. The world grows dark, but not in our eyes which still look out on sunshine and shadow running races with the wind across the waves. The world grows silent, but not in our ears, for a moorland stream brings the sound of crashing water to our very doorstep from the sea. The night is as sweet as the day. And what of the birds? They are at times forgotten, for I am not one of those who find the world 'but a sad and empty place' when for a little while no living creature is in sight. But I agree with Hudson when he adds that all the varied forms of life give the world 'a meaning, and a grace and beauty and splendour not its own.' I like at times to put aside my glasses and to journey with the birds, our fellow-travellers, along the road of life. If the bird-lover misses on this cliff a peregrine, on that slope a woodlark, if he is for ever thinking of the bird he saw in this place the other day and hopes soon to see again, many of the lovely things in life will pass him by. Though

a place may be so wonderful that the absence of living creatures is scarcely noticed, it must be admitted that when a number do arrive, it is as though a forest tree suddenly burst into bloom—but the beauty of its form is often then forgotten.

We do not, of course, as a rule leave the coast without a few entrancing pictures of the birds we love. It may be only a little dunlin, a common sparrow among waders, that made us smile because it was so particularly tame and absurd. As it scampers past, its legs, whirring madly indeed, still do not present the blurred appearance that might be expected. They do not even seem to cross. Instead, one apparently sticks out in front and one behind, each vibrating violently. This strange effect and the bird's tight, solemn little face give one the impression that here is a dunlin performing a fantastic new dance step, practising with all the earnest concentration of one about to undergo an examination. Or it may be a flock of silvery grey plover flying against a glass-green sea, their jet-black axillaries twinkling as they go. It may be a flock of white birds far out over the waves, sweeping across the water, a diminutive, dazzling snow-storm of life. In this case it may well be a mad-hatter's snow-storm, for as we look on, single flakes, becoming heavy on a sudden, detach themselves from the glittering mass to fall with surprising speed and a splash into the sea. The extreme whiteness of the flakes, the occasional meteoric descents and the resulting spurt of water, all tell us that these are gannets. Donning our seven-league boots—taking up binoculars—we come upon a scene of glorious, indeed riotous, abandon. With slowly beating, black-tipped wings, some two hundred gannets circle over the water. Suddenly and almost before they have time to close their six-foot span, two or three,

four or five, even nine or ten drop headlong, nearly touching, into the waves. The sea boils at this onslaught, but more and more hurl themselves into the same place, never to reappear—or so it seems to us, for in the confusion of flying spray it is difficult to watch the water closely and notice their return. Individuals are diving all the time, but the flock as a whole has periods of quiescence that alternate with others of frenzied activity. The transition, however, from one to the other is so startlingly abrupt that one cannot help feeling that the birds are abandoning themselves to an inexorable fate. It hardly seems credible that they are diving of their own free will. One is inclined to believe that some gross monster of the deep is sucking them down into its belly in a swirl of wind and water.

Sometimes, returning from the shore, we take with us the image of a single bird at close range, and at work. I remember watching a curlew catching crabs in relatively deep water, where its long curved bill (which may reach a length of seven inches) and its long slender legs give it a certain advantage over other waders. Having caught a crab, it would peck and bully it into acquiescence. Then, holding it in the very tip of its bill, it would toss it up into its mouth and swallow it, legs and all. With a large crab it appeared to use its immense bill to impart sufficient momentum to overcome the resistance offered by the mouth! For one crab flew repeatedly backwards and forwards between the bill-tip and the mouth, until at last it disappeared from view—to reappear as a bulge in the bird's throat. Since then, on one of our trips to the river-mouth, we have seen a later stage in this little comedy—or tragedy, if your sympathies are with the crab. The curlew's throat was on this occasion already bulging with good things, as it stood by the water-side. Suddenly it disgorged a large

roundish object and, putting it down on the sand, examined it critically as much as to say, 'This is very tough. I wonder if it is worth keeping?' At that moment, however, a herring gull flew up and, driving off the curlew, pounced upon the object of their mutual interest.

Looking up an entry in an old notebook, this curlew, shall we say, that lizard or a mouse, I feel that I am retreading footsteps in the past. For the search may take me in imagination down a sandy lane, across a field to a well-remembered wood; high upon the hills or along a rocky shore. In the lane many a stile tempts me to linger; on the hill many a distant landmark bids me turn aside, while along the coast the urge to look round the next headland grows ever more insistent. But wherever my search takes me, I hurry along, intent upon the matter in hand. Yet in so doing I often feel that I am in the position of a man climbing a hill and refusing to look back, forgetting in the exhilaration of the moment the panoramic view of earth and sky and sea that stretches far behind. Nor do I care, for though one's own notes recall many a long-forgotten scene, there is a better way than this of looking back. Putting our books aside, it is only necessary to go out into the open to find in every robin, tit or bat, every snake or toad or hedgehog that one meets, a signpost pointing down the highways and byways of memory to a day now long ago.

Inevitably, therefore, on some of our visits to the coast, we return not so much with a new picture of a familiar creature, as with an old memory revived. We stop to watch a common scoter diving into the shelter of waves towering angrily above its head, and disappearing from view with the unconcern of a rabbit entering its burrow. Three-quarters of a mile from the shore the waves break over the sandbanks outside the river-mouth. Right up to

the beach they foam, while from each and every crest the wind flings back the spray. In this turmoil of water the black duck swims alone—and suddenly I recall another black duck, also alone, and a strange thing that happened to me as a boy. I see myself and another boy crawling along a ridge of shingle that runs between the sea and a brackish pool. Beside this pool a few brent-geese are standing. Gradually we creep nearer to a wild goose than either of us have ever been before. Then suddenly the only other bird in sight, the duck at sea, flies in a curve towards the shore. With one eye on the geese and most of that on the nearest bird, we watch the duck coming closer and closer, expecting it, of course, to fly past overhead. To our surprise it suddenly drops down on to the beach not many yards away. Then for several moments this extraordinary bird, a female scoter, looks us over, standing stock-still and staring in the most brazen manner possible, a question-mark in feathers. Then, with quiet deliberation, it takes itself off to the sea again. Did it recognise us as human beings? Or, not having seen us walk erect, did it mistake us for seals, which were common on that coast? I wish I knew what lay behind those puzzled eyes. For might I then not entice one of those mighty flocks 'undulating like distant steamer smoke' at sea? When thousands swim upon the waves, blackening the water with a living moving carpet, might I not bring them to me so that we could look at one another as fellow-mortals?

Whenever now I meet a scoter on the sea, I cannot help thinking of that duck. It may seem strange that I should have forgotten this curious bird, but at the time it still seemed to me quite an ordinary thing for a duck to do. In one's early days the realisation comes but slowly and

with reluctance that in all the world there is not another creature so much dreaded or so cruel as man.

### III.

Every winter we raid the coast by the river-mouth, listening if only for a day to the message of our stream. Yet are we strangers in this land of geese and gannets, trippers to the sea which is for us a Mecca. I think, looking back over winters that have passed, that we are drawn there by the light. Of course we are drawn too by the glory of infinite space in sky and sea, and by the birds that one sees on the shore. But, whenever I think of the coast, I think first of its brilliance, and brilliance means colour, for the light, stronger there than inland, is intense without being hard. When the winter steals a day from the spring, and the sun is hot and the sky is cloudless, I feel as I walk by the shore that here is a new world beyond imagination clean and pure, a world perhaps waiting for man when he has learned to control the evil inventions of his miraculous mind.

Thinking of the winter brilliance and the colour of the coast, I think mainly of spring-like days when the tide is out and acres of yellow sand gleam golden in the sun. For then the red cliffs dipping into a blue sea take on a depth of colour startling on a winter's day. Then too the gulls are transfigured, so that one can hardly take one's eyes from their white breasts and delicate pearly-grey backs. On such a day, I wish for nothing better than to stand and watch a flock of herring gulls in the air, especially if there is a sprinkling of black-headed gulls in their midst, for the lesser birds look small and unusually dainty beside their large companions. At times a flock of gulls can be as overwhelming as a blaze of thrift on a Cornish headland.

The grace and beauty of the birds, the scent and colour of the flowers—surely these are sufficient for a day. Yet the temptation to turn one's glasses on to other birds is strong—nor would that matter if one had time to look at all of them, but there is rarely time. For this reason it is often better, I think, to give one's hour or one's day to a single species or a single bird, so that something may be learned or something may be seen that will never be forgotten.

The brilliance of the coast is to a large extent but the reflection of the sky upon the water. Much of its colour, however, is but the normal colour of common birds. For it must not be forgotten that inland, when the sky is overcast, birds are seen as it were through a glass darkly. On these radiant days by the sea, however, even the eyes of a bird may flash and sparkle in the sun. I can never think of our visits to the estuary without thinking of the marvellous eyes of the Slavonian grebe. This delightful bird of dabchick build is often seen along our shores in winter. Riding rather high in the water with neck held straight, it appears to be on the look-out for danger, yet it is easy to approach as it dives just beyond the breaking waves. Walking forward while the bird is under water, standing still while it is on the surface, I have often been close enough to see the reddish-orange eyes of the little bobbing figure. And on these occasions, taking up my glasses, I have never ceased to wonder at the blaze of colour from the iris, a blaze which in amount and intensity is really astonishing in a head so small. This little brown grebe that has in the winter such very white cheeks, carries indeed a flaming beacon in its head.

One happy afternoon we saw not six separate grebes as we had often done before, but a flotilla of half a dozen

drifting on the current down the river. Perhaps that look of anxiety on the sea is connected with choppy water. Anyhow, on this occasion, on an almost oily surface, there was no hint of an upraised questing neck. Rarely indeed have I seen any bird that looked so round or cobby. As they swept towards us in a compact group, their red eyes shining in the sun, there was a *splash!* and the whole lot disappeared. Swimming past us under water, they reappeared a moment later in the same formation, to float on down the swiftly flowing river out upon the ocean. There was a certain unreality in this, due in part perhaps to those amazing eyes, and in part to the birds' unusually rounded forms. Then, too, they were not so much swimming as drifting past us on a swirling watery carpet—they might have been outriders in a fairy procession not intended for human eyes.

That same afternoon we watched a common sight far out upon the sand, a sight, however, which in colour, in movement and in sound typifies the life of the shore as the winter draws on. Several small parties of oyster-catchers were feeding on a mussel-bed at the water's edge, walking sedately about in search, one supposes, of a mussel with slightly gaping shells, or of one lying upside down—the position in which it is most easily opened by the strong, flattened orange bill. In festive black and white, these amusing birds with flesh-pink legs went solemnly about their business. From time to time, however, one would raise its voice in the well-known piping call, addressing its remarks to a second bird which pretended not to hear. Eventually, however, one of these pied pipers chanced upon a kindred spirit. Whether his piping was of a quality better attuned to an oyster-catcher's ear, or whether his partner was more than usually susceptible, I do not know.

Anyhow, on this occasion the second bird, far from turning a deaf ear, actually returned the serenade and walked towards her suitor. While still some yards apart, both birds suddenly bent down their heads until their widely opened bills were nearly resting vertically on the sand. Then, in this strange position, they advanced slowly towards one another until their foreheads almost touched, whereupon, each bird moving to its right, they began to revolve in a circle together, piping loudly all the time. But before the circle was completed once, one bird began to chase the other and the duet was interrupted. Sometimes the male, far from chasing the female, seems to forget all about her. Turning this way and that and even presenting his back to the hen, he seems indeed lost to the world, enthralled in the enjoyment of his vocal powers. Often two males in a flock begin to court the same female and then, the excitement spreading, other birds join in until there is a regular 'piping party' of a dozen individuals. Long before the winter flocks break up, amorous males run about the river-mouth or stand in groups with lowered heads, piping their trilling nuptial song. These performances, fascinating to watch, are especially interesting because they seem to be on the way to becoming social functions, like the dancing of many species. Moreover, as late as July three birds are so often seen and heard together that one is also reminded of the ceremonial display—in which three birds take part—of the South American spur-winged plover. However, a pair of oyster-catchers will also pipe and posture in this comic manner when driving an intruder from their territory. As is so often the case among birds, the means of expressing the emotions are curiously limited. In bird-watching, as on other occasions, things are not always what they seem.

There is, too, a good deal more in this clownish bird than meets the eye. Pompous it may be, grotesque even, yet it is skilled in its own profession. Though its bill is the perfect weapon to drive between the two halves of a bivalve, it would be of little use in the hands of a bungler. Despite its misleading name, the oyster-catcher feeds to a large extent on mussels and on limpets. It is said on good authority to be an adept at 'smartly knocking the unsuspecting limpet from its hold.' We, however, were fortunate enough on one of our forays to see it employing a second method, into which the element of surprise hardly entered. And no doubt there are still other ways in which limpets are taken. I remember that it was a brilliant day with a nip in the air that had tempted us to wander rather far from our usual haunts. When a number of pools and seaweed-covered rocks began to appear, with here and there a horizontal slab of sandstone, smooth save for the bell-tents of limpets, three oyster-catchers flew round a headland, uttering shrill cries. Flying together, they separated on reaching their destination, and as if by magic disappeared. For here the pied plumage, which in the air or on the sand is conspicuous, tends to break up and hide the birds' outline. But through field-glasses we were able to watch them at their meal. One individual, pottering about between the pools, suddenly ran towards a limpet and bent down to push or drive its bill at the junction of rock and shell. The limpet remained firm, but directly the bird attacked it from the other side, it relaxed. Applying, perhaps, a certain amount of leverage, the oyster-catcher wrenched up the shell so that it rolled an inch or two away, whereupon its owner was removed and eaten in a couple of mouthfuls.

The other birds were similarly employed. They seemed to know almost at once which limpets were immovable,

and we saw only one unsuccessful attack prolonged. In this case the bird waited for a limpet several times hidden by waves. Probing around the edge of the shell, the oyster-catchers were evidently on the look-out for a limpet unable to make close contact with the rock, owing to some irregularity of the surface. When, however, they failed to discover a gap beneath the limpet's armour, they sometimes broke away the edges of the shell and forced an entry. Then, with no doubt a few vigorous stabs, the unfortunate mollusc was induced to relinquish all hope of a further stay in this world. After their meal, when the oyster-catchers had flown away, we collected the shells we had actually seen removed, and discovered several with freshly chipped and broken edges.

That evening, on returning home, I realised that in future not only our stream but even some of the animals in it would take my thoughts away to the coast. For, crossing the bridge that leads to our house, I saw a tiny limpet on a stone in the swiftly flowing current. I had seen it before and others too in several different places, for this dainty, fragile creature is common enough in many an English stream and river. But never before had a fresh-water limpet carried my thoughts on its back to the sea. I could not help feeling that here was a messenger from the coast, knocking at my door with news of the world as I know it along a wave-washed shore. In the summer when the tempting stream tempts no longer, I shall see these little limpets, and seeing them, forget the garden for awhile to walk in imagination amongst the oyster-catchers, the sheld-duck and the plover that next winter we hope to visit once again.

## A DESERT TRAGEDY.

*The witch-squaw mumbles in a lone coulee ;  
 The rye grass waves by her lone tepee.  
 Last night she heard a heron and to-day she heard a crow ;  
 The black hawk is crying where the button sages grow ;  
 The mustangs are watering at Blue Mud Springs ;  
 A coyote is howling where the dust cloud clings.  
 The witch-squaw mumbles as she pounds her camas root ;  
 The heat-waves are dancing on the top of Copper Butte.*

*In spite of her wailing he died last night—  
 Her medicine and magic and the kildeer's flight ;  
 He died last night and she knows it is too late :  
 The witch-squaw mumbles as she broods her fate.  
 Old Bat rode away before the sun arose ;  
 His pinto faded where the Texas-tommy blows.  
 The late sun is slanting on the malapi,  
 Making dreary shadows on the alkali.*

*The witch-squaw mumbles to a grave alone ;  
 The bob-cat stalks where the yellow sod is thrown.  
 A baby died before the dismal dawn—  
 Its Piute soul down the winding trail has gone ;  
 Last night she was a-beating on a buckskin drum  
 While the night-hawks whirred with their demon hum.  
 The bull-frog's chumping where the muddy waters well ;  
 The rimrocks beckon, then seem to wave farewell.*

*The witch-squaw mumbles in a lone coulee ;  
 The low wind raves by her lone tepee.*

CULLEN JONES

San Francisco.

### THE ALMOND TREE.

BY MABEL SHELDON.

OLD SALLY had been ill all through the winter. Three months she had spent in her one dingy room in a drab house in a dreary slum, looked after by her neighbour in the room opposite, visited weekly by the parish doctor and the minister from the ugly brick chapel at the end of the road. She had borne it all patiently enough, but now towards the end of February she was fretting, and all about an almond tree.

It stood in the sooty garden overshadowed by a gasometer and a warehouse. A garden in which nothing would grow, it was the haunt of thin, skulking cats and shrill-voiced, dirty children. Every spring the pink blossom burst forth against the background of a grimy wall and showered down on fruitless soil beneath ; the one beautiful thing in a world of ugliness.

Every year, as long as she could remember, Sally had waited for it, loved it and regretted its fading, and now she would miss it. If she could only drag herself from the iron bedstead and peer through the smutty curtains over the chipped washstand she might catch a glimpse of it. But she did not lose hope that she might yet be well enough at least to look through the smeary glass at the lovely tree, until the minister suggested that she had a holiday.

A holiday ! Sally had not had such a thing for years, and here was a chance to visit the sea at the expense of the chapel holiday fund.

'And a taxi to take you,' the minister was saying, when Sally remembered the almond tree. If she were to go away she wouldn't see it, not even for a minute. They would carry her downstairs and out of the front door.

'Don't you want to go, Sally?' the minister was asking.

She couldn't say she didn't want to miss seeing the almond in blossom, so she just said, 'I don't know, sir.'

'Well, think it over,' and Sally promised she would.

Her kindly neighbour opposite said of course she must go; so did the doctor and the rather officious chapel visitor whom Sally disliked. So there was nothing for it but to consent and to appear grateful as the officious visitor said she should.

The night before her departure, Sally lay awake staring at the moon, the glory of which even the dirty glass could not dim. The almond would be breaking into blossom now, and when she came home it would have faded. A thought flashed through her wakeful mind. Could she? Dare she? Trembling, she sat up in bed. The house was silent but for the thin wail of a baby. Stepping out of bed, she clutched the rickety dressing-table, and groped her way to the door, down the shabby stairs, and on through the damp, smelling scullery. A dog howled mournfully as she opened the door and stepped into the ugly yard magically transformed by the moonlight—and the almond tree.

It was bursting into blossom just as Sally had known it would be. Forgetting her weakness, she just gazed. This was the last time she would see it this year.

Suddenly the moon was hidden by a cloud and a vast sinking sensation seized Sally's mind and limbs. The dismal whistle of a passing train echoed through her whirling mind. Desperately she leaned against the battered dustbin and, just as she felt she must sink into nothingness, the moon broke through once again, revealing the almond tree in all

its springtime glory, while a light breeze puffed a few fluttering petals into her lap. Sally smiled.

She was still smiling when they found her the next morning.

### JUMIÈGES.

*We took the path across the fields  
That slope down to the silver Seine,  
The landscape washed by Summer rain,  
Its distance lost in dewy haze,  
Stretch'd far and wide to meet our gaze.*

*Then rose the towers of Jumièges  
That once held sway o'er all this land.  
O jewel, destroy'd by vandal hand,  
The beauty of thy vast design  
Enchants us yet in curve and line !*

*Forgotten the artists skill'd who plann'd  
These soaring arcs and massive piers.  
Gone is the pomp of former years !  
But graceful still in slow decay  
This pious work of olden day.*

*A thousand monks dwelt 'neath thy shade,  
A thousand serving men obeyed  
Thy Abbots' stern decrees.  
And princes, warriors, legates, priests  
Attended at thy stately feasts.*

*The Confessor here was wont to pray,  
Here Harold sware his crown away.  
And Lionheart came from Holy Land.  
The censers sway'd, the choirs intoned,  
The worldly for their sins atoned.*

*All dust—long dust—of no more worth  
Than drifting leaf or clod of earth !  
Now who will stay and mourn with thee  
The passing of thy pageantry ?  
What shadows haunt thy peace ?*

*Perchance in some soft wintry dusk  
Along the whispering wind doth waft  
The faint sweet perfume of the musk,  
As all embalmed in casket fine,  
The monks, with solemn rites divine,  
Entomb again the lawless heart  
Of Agnes Sorel—well beloved !—  
Or, winding through the cloister door,  
Twin sons of Clovis bear once more  
Where they shall never part.*

D. L. BOWEN.

*TERRIBLE IN ANGER.*

BY J. E. SEWELL.

LIKE most respectable husbands with small incomes, Mr. Pendleton had sometimes contemplated the murder of his wife. Not maliciously, with weed-killers or boiled fly-papers, of course ; he was no monster. But there are times, as every respectable husband with a small income knows, when things are really getting a little too much—when passionate manhood, the soaring, free spirit of independence in all of us must assert itself once and for all against domestic tyranny and injustice. At such a time, brutality and violence may reveal themselves in personalities which the world has known up to then as diffident, placatory and gentle. And if, in that terrible upsurging, the means lie to hand for murder, murder may be committed.

The day had started badly for Mr. Pendleton. Two bills had arrived by the morning's post, and they had made his eyes glint behind his spectacles. They were for underwear of a frivolous type—a type which, privately, he considered well beyond the means of the wife of a seven-pounds-a-week assistant cashier, already carrying heavy and legitimate financial burdens. He had decided, however, then and there, to say nothing about it. He detested rows at the breakfast-table. He had coughed gently as he had passed the bills over to her, that was all. He had gone on eating his eggs and bacon, perhaps a shade pointedly, but no more than a shade. And then it had started.

The sighting-shot had been a question which was also a challenge. 'I suppose you're sulking about those bills ?'

she had queried. And when, with careful courtesy and dignity, he had replied that he was not sulking, she had not only contradicted him but begun to generalise on the selfishness and meanness of men who gave themselves good times without stint, yet, when their wives ventured to buy a few essentials, flew into sullen rages.

'Look here,' he had said, 'do stop. I don't care what you buy. For God's sake don't upset yourself. We're nearly at the end of our tether, anyway.'

This last had been a trifle rhetorical, but the occasion had not been one for subtle distinctions. It need not have provoked what followed. And as what followed is familiar in all its essentials to all respectable husbands with small incomes, and concerns nobody but them, we may skip to the climax, which was a very pink Mr. Pendleton stabbing at the linoleum in the hall with his umbrella to emphasise that he was sick, sick, sick of it all, slamming the front door, and arriving, still shaking with temper, at the station to find that his usual train had gone without him five minutes earlier.

Walking up and down the platform, he found his anger cooling, the demon slipping back into its lair. Calmer, he found himself a little awed by the force of his own passion which had dried his throat, and now made him feel rather queasy. It came, he supposed, from his Italian grandmother, this blind fury which had possessed him so utterly. Not for the first time, he reflected, Marjorie had had a narrow escape. She would never know. To her he was just the docile breadwinner, who sometimes kicked over the traces. But supposing the row this morning had taken place in the bedroom. In the drawer of the dressing-table lay a loaded revolver. He had bought it from an ex-officer down in his luck a year or two ago, and he always kept it loaded. The

chances of a burglary at The Laburnums were not great, but the schoolboy in him had exulted in the possession of a death-dealing weapon, and it gave him a sense of security to know that it was there. Suppose the row had happened in the bedroom, and his hand had strayed towards the drawer. Suppose that, when his rage had been at its height, the demon had triumphed—oh, only for a moment!—and he had walked out of the house a free man. His eye caught a newsbill: ‘Bloomsbury Murderer At Large.’ It had been just such another crime of blind passion, he reflected, and now the police were after the wretched Dubinsky, or whatever his name was, for doing something that he couldn’t help. It was appalling to think of, but it might have happened at The Laburnums. Thank God that the row had not taken place in the bedroom.

Settling himself in the carriage, Mr. Pendleton gave himself up to a complicated reverie in which his self-respect was further enhanced by the gradual dawning of a realisation that only his iron will had prevented him, even as it was, from changing the battlefield to the bedroom and letting destiny take its course.

The day had begun badly, but worse was to follow. His lateness meant a muttered, untruthful apology to his chief, who received it with a smile and a whimsical raising of the eyebrows, more galling than a rebuke. But, in the middle of the morning, a mistaken entry was discovered, and, after an hour’s anxious research, Mr. Pendleton was forced to admit that the error was almost certainly his. The chief had been unwontedly solemn. ‘It’s a serious matter, you know, Pendleton,’ he had said. ‘You’ve been with us a long time, fortunately, and, of course, I shan’t take any action. But I don’t know what I can do about it if it happens again.’ And Mr. Pendleton had been obliged to say,

'Thank you very much, Mr. Clutterbuck. I can't think how I came to . . . of course it shan't happen again . . . thank you very much . . .' and drift miserably out of the room, in all that bitterness of soul which comes from being forgiven when one is utterly and completely in the wrong.

It was a day for brooding, and Mr. Pendleton brooded, incoherently and desperately, over a lonely teashop lunch. One of these days he would tell Clutterbuck what he thought of him, pompous little toad. Lucky for him that his subordinate had not lost his grip to-day. Suppose the revolver had been in his pocket during the interview, and Clutterbuck had been just a little more insulting. It might have happened then, in a flash. Mr. Pendleton shrugged his shoulders and got up to go. He heard his name called from another table, and looking round saw Hilton. The two had been together in the same diggings, years back. Hilton had been sent to Manchester. They had corresponded for a bit and then forgotten each other's existence.

Hilton was effusive, and Pendleton forgot his own depression in the warmth of the greeting. He had not so much changed as expanded with the years—a little more florid, more emphatic, his hair even curlier. He looked prosperous. 'Pen,' he said, 'you son of a gun, you're a sight for sore eyes. I've only been in London a couple of weeks. Very cushy job, too. Going to send for the little woman soon. Come and have a drink.'

'Can't be done,' said Mr. Pendleton regretfully; 'I'm overdue back now.'

'For crying out loud,' said Hilton, 'what's another ten minutes? But you always were a conscientious beggar. All right, then, I'll tell you what. Meet me at the Blue Post to-night at six. Hang it, we've got to celebrate.'

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Mr. Pendleton hesitated. 'I'm a married man these days,' he said rather weakly.

Hilton roared with laughter. 'Good old Pen,' he shouted. 'But she won't mind—meeting an old friend and all. Anyhow, who's boss?'

'All right,' said Mr. Pendleton with sudden resolution (who was boss, anyhow?—he'd show her). 'Six at the Blue Post.'

It would be like old times, Mr. Pendleton reflected as he left the office that evening. Good old times, six years ago, when if you wished to stay out late you stayed out late, and nobody to ask you where you'd been. Not that Marjorie had ever asked him such a question, but then, on the few occasions that he had celebrated—an old boys' dinner or a bachelor friend's birthday—he had always given due notice, and tiptoed to bed as unobtrusively as possible. This was different. This was a firm defiance of a six-year-old habit, and Mr. Pendleton, the wounds of the morning still smarting, felt the better for it.

He pushed open the saloon-bar door, and saw Hilton in a corner with two other men. He was hailed with delight, and introduced to them. They were drinking whiskies, and Mr. Pendleton realised with a momentary qualm that the rose-cuttings he had intended to buy for the garden that week would not be bought if he stood many rounds. But that couldn't be helped. At the moment Hilton was buying the drinks, and Mr. Pendleton said 'Mine's a bitter' with a full splendid consciousness of burning his boats.

'Pen's one of my oldest friends,' Hilton explained. 'Damn' nice chap, if he is a bit on the quiet side.'

'He had to have someone to put him to bed,' Mr. Pen-

dleton riposted facetiously. And the two strangers agreed, and said they were pleased to meet him. The argument was political, and, after his third bitter, he found himself surprisingly fluent and insistent on the follies of the Socialists, a matter on which he did not feel very deeply. It was pleasant, he felt, to meet an intelligent man, who knew what was what, except in certain matters of politics, economics and finance, to counter his thrusts and produce new arguments, while Hilton put in an occasional 'Got you there, Simmy,' and the fourth of the party, a taciturn creature, would suck his pipe and say 'Ar' at intervals.

By eight o'clock, Mr. Pendleton, flushed and triumphant, had exploded to his own satisfaction the last Marxian fallacy, and his opponent looked at his watch and said he must be going. With a slight shock, he realised that if he left now he would not be home until nine-twenty, two hours late for dinner. 'I think it's time I was moving too, actually,' he said. Hilton would not hear of it.

'Nonsense, man,' he said, 'we're only just beginning. Don't take any notice of old Trotsky. I know why he's gone. I'll tell you what's wrong with him, old boy'—he lowered his voice to a pseudo-confidential undertone—'scared stiff of his wife.' Hilton's laughter bellowed out, and a grin spread round the taciturn man's pipe. Pendleton, conscious of a certain insincerity, laughed too.

'S a fact,' continued Hilton. 'Drink up and have another. Something short?'

Mr. Pendleton took gin.

'S a positive fact,' said Hilton as he returned with the drinks. 'Told me so himself. Not in so many words, mind you. But I knew. Y'see, I had a bit of bother myself, the first year.'

'You did?' Mr. Pendleton asked with polite incredulity.

'Certainly I did,' said Hilton complacently. 'And I'll tell you something else, Pen. I'll bet you did too.'

'Well . . . perhaps a little, just at first,' Mr. Pendleton admitted.

'And I'll bet,' proceeded Hilton, 'you haven't any trouble now?'

Mr. Pendleton laughed briefly and, he hoped, sardonically.

'You see?' Hilton turned to the other man. 'It's what I've always said. You got to be master. Got to be, see? Stands to reason there'll be trouble first of all. I wouldn't give a damn for a woman without a bit of spirit. But you got to tame it. Old Pen here knows. He's been through it.'

'Ar,' said the man with the pipe.

Hilton was well launched. 'I'll tell you what it is,' he went on, 'we're all friends here, I haven't got to pick my words. You got to tame 'em. If you don't, they'll tame you. And then, what are you?—eh, Pen?'

Mr. Pendleton coughed.

'Three-quarters of the misery in this world,' went on Hilton earnestly, 'more than that, seven-eighths of the misery in this world, are brought on by women taming men. You can see 'em in any office, with their "yes-sir"s and "no-sir"s and their "don't-talk-to-me-I-got-to-catch-the-six-fifteen"s, poor little swine. And why is it? Ten to one their spirit's been broken by a woman. And once that's happened, they're finished. Finished, see? Finished.' And tragically, Hilton drained his glass.

They had more drinks. Mr. Pendleton felt impelled to carry the discussion further. Gravely he eyed his gin. 'Frightful risks some women run,' he said, shaking his head, 'frightful risks. On and on, day by day, week by week . . . years . . . and then one day something snaps, and what

happens? Murder's what happens. Frightful risk, nagging willing horse.'

Hilton did not agree. 'They get past it,' he said. 'Finished. Might as well be dead. No spirit. As you say, month by month, year by year . . . they get past it. Bow and scrape to anybody. No good. Nothing there.'

'What about this Dubinsky?' Mr. Pendleton challenged. 'Supposed to have been married ten years. Then loses his temper one night. Phut! Cuts her throat.'

Hilton was ready. 'Foreign, y'see. Foreign. No accounting for them.'

But now Pendleton was passionately in earnest. 'Anybody could do it sometimes,' he said; and then, collecting himself cunningly, 'Anybody who was married to one of these women. It must be awful.'

'Awful,' agreed Hilton, and 'Ar' murmured the man with the pipe.

The talk drifted on to other topics, and Mr. Pendleton had more gin, not because he wanted it, but because he hated to go home. At closing-time the three men parted, the other two taking a bus crossing the river. Mr. Pendleton, on whom the night air was having a temporary exhilarating effect, decided that he would walk to Baker Street Station. The walk would sober him, and he also had a theory that by gulping down a great deal of fresh air he would be able to dispel the mixed aromas of gin and beer from his breath. He was not stupidly drunk. His legs were reliable, as he found by walking for some distance quite casually along the kerb. His speech was, he knew, rather blurred, but he could say 'The Leith police dismisseth us,' and did, several times.

But the talk and the liquor were busy in his brain. It buzzed at random across the past few hours, and fastened

firmly on Hilton's anatomy of marriage. 'Finished,' Hilton had said. 'Finished,' and drained his glass—like that. He'd had trouble at the beginning, but of course that was all over. You had to tame them. And here was he, Henry Pendleton—good old Pen, who held his liquor like a man at one time, and put his friends to bed—afraid to go home. He was seeing things clearly and ruthlessly now. Afraid to go home, let's face it. He had always been afraid—no, not afraid at first, just hating arguments and tears and more arguments. But it had become fear. A dread, a genuine dread, and what was the result? Why, Clutterbuck could kick him about the office as he chose. The human doormat. No future. None whatever. Just a slave, to be kicked and cuffed about by Clutterbucks for another twenty or thirty years, if he was lucky. Tears of self-pity welled in Mr. Pendleton's eyes.

He, Henry Pendleton, had been tamed. Oh, quite certainly tamed. He was going home for his whipping now. And he'd take it. Like a lamb, he'd take it. Or, by God, would he? Suppose that, to-night of all nights, she should unleash the demon within him—that reckless, passionate, blind demon, bred of the swift, hot Southern blood that flowed in his veins. Foreign blood. You couldn't account for it. And to-night, the quarrel would be in the bedroom. Perhaps he would be standing near the drawer. On and on, she would go, from the pillow. On and on. 'For God's sake, be quiet, woman!' On and on. The hand—not his hand, the demon's hand—would be groping in the drawer. On and on. And then . . .

Mr. Pendleton shook himself back to reality. Nothing like that would happen, of course. He was finished, and when you're finished, you've nothing left. And yet . . . He shivered with an apprehension which had in it a strange,

small measure of exultation. It wasn't impossible. But now the chill night air was doing its work. He felt sick, and weak, and very weary. Looking round, he found himself in a square with trees in it, and dimly wondered that his feet should have taken him so unerringly towards Baker Street. He must be somewhere in Bloomsbury, near the Euston Road. He would rest for a little while against the railings. He didn't think he was going to be sick, but he'd have to concentrate his will-power for a bit.

He was still concentrating when somebody said, 'Anything wrong, sir ?'

He turned and saw a policeman. This would never do. 'Nothing, officer, nothing whatever, nothing at all.' His voice was drunker than he had thought.

'You look a bit seedy,' said the policeman, 'but I wouldn't 'ang about, sir, if I was you.'

'No, no, officer, certainly not. Just going Baker Street.' They moved off together. Suddenly, as they passed a street-lamp, the policeman said, 'Ere, wait a minute,' grabbed him by the arm, and shone his bull's-eye straight into Mr. Pendleton's face. 'Hullo !' said the policeman. 'What's your name ?'

Mr. Pendleton struggled feebly. 'How dare you, officer, how dare you ! Let me go at once. You can't arrest me like this.'

Imperturbably the policeman regarded him. 'I don't know about that,' he said slowly, 'I don't know. What's your name, anyway ?'

'My name is Henry Pendleton, of The Laburnums, Hillgate Avenue, Harrow. And I warn you, officer, you can't do this. You can't. I . . . good heavens, why . . .'

The grip did not relax. 'You're not sober, you know,' said the policeman, almost gently. 'I don't want to have

to charge you for drunk and disorderly. You'd better come along to the station and talk to them there. P'r'aps I'm wrong, but you look a bit like someone we want. Anyhow, I'm not taking chances. Will you come without making a fuss? It's no use struggling, you know.'

The cold sweat was trickling down Mr. Pendleton's nose. Drunk and disorderly! The neighbours, his wife, the office! He'd lose his job. No use arguing about it. He was drunk. Not very, but drunk enough. In the policeman's grasp, he was limp and powerless. If he went quietly to the station, he could pull himself together, let them see it was all a mistake. All a mistake. 'All right, officer, I'll come,' he said. 'Can we have a cab?'

They walked together to a near-by cab-rank, the policeman holding him closely. Seated in the cab, Mr. Pendleton found his momentary panic subsiding. 'You're surely not going on with this nonsense, officer?' he said. 'I admit I've had a few drinks, and was feeling ill when you found me. But I'm quite recovered now. You know, it would be a very serious matter for me—surely you're not going on with it?' His voice was quavering, pleading.

'If you're willing to help us, you needn't worry about being charged,' said the policeman. 'But there's someone we're looking for to-night, and he's either you or somebody very much like you. If it isn't you, you'll soon be able to prove it.'

'I assure you it's an absurd mistake, officer,' said Mr. Pendleton, 'but I'll do everything I can, of course. I've committed no crime. Perhaps some unfortunate resemblance . . .'

'I expect that's it,' said the policeman gloomily. 'Still, you never know.'

At the station, Mr. Pendleton wilted afresh under the

eye of the sergeant at the desk. There was a muttered conversation, and the sergeant said, 'Looks like it,' cryptically. Then, to Mr. Pendleton, 'Your name, I believe, is Pendleton, sir? Won't you sit down?'

'Thank you, I will,' he said, and sank into a chair. Thank God, he was sober enough, now. 'There seems to be some mistake....'

The sergeant spoke soothingly. 'I'm sure there is, Mr.—er—Pendleton,' he said. 'We'll clear it up in no time. Just as a formality, now, have you any papers about you for identification?'

Of course. Why hadn't he thought of that before? 'Certainly I have,' he said, and groped in his pockets. There would be a couple of letters, visiting cards, a season ticket . . . or would there? With a sinking heart, Mr. Pendleton realised that, in his tempestuous exit that morning, he had forgotten to take his pocket-book from his desk. He was known on the line, and nobody had asked to see the season ticket. He fumbled feverishly for a bit, hoping against hope that some letter had been left in a pocket. There was nothing.

'I . . . I . . . it's ridiculous,' he faltered; 'I'm afraid I haven't anything to identify me at all. You see, I rushed out in such a hurry this morning . . .'

'Quite, quite,' said the sergeant, more soothingly than ever. 'We'll just get the inspector along. I hope you won't mind waiting.' He left the room, and Mr. Pendleton was left with another policeman. The sergeant returned. 'He'll be along in ten minutes,' he said cheerfully. 'We always have to send for the inspector in charge of the case on these occasions.'

'But, tell me, who am I supposed to be?' Mr. Pendleton asked.

The sergeant looked steadily at him for a moment. 'Ever hear of a man named Dubinsky?' he asked sharply.

Mr. Pendleton sat bolt upright in his chair. 'Good God! The man who cut his wife's throat? You think I'm a murderer?' Don't as how you've got any reason to think that?

'Now, now, sir,' said the sergeant, 'we don't think you're a murderer. We don't jump to conclusions without evidence like that. We've got our duty to do, that's all. Just a formality.'

Mr. Pendleton's brain refused to work. Murder! It was grotesque, impossible. The sergeant was still watching him—hoping he'd give himself away. But he couldn't give himself away, he'd done nothing. And to be practically accused of murder! He stared up incredulously. The sensation of being observed made him self-conscious, and he spoke with careful deliberation. 'Will you show me a photograph of the man you want?' he asked.

The sergeant went to his desk and produced a picture. 'There you are, sir,' he said. 'I think you'll see why you've been put to this inconvenience.'

Pendleton gazed bewildered at the photograph. The original had been an 'arty' camera-study of high-lights and deep shadows. In reproduction, the face, he realised, might well be his own. It had the same dark, small moustache, the large eyes and the faintly puzzled expression.

'I see what you mean, sergeant,' he said, and handed it back. 'I'll just have to establish my identity to the inspector.'

'That's all, sir,' replied the sergeant, 'just a formality.'

Miserably Mr. Pendleton waited on. Murder. Cutting a woman's throat in a rage. And for that you must see the judge put on his black cap, you must spend three weeks in a cell, closely watched, and then walk out to be hanged.

'The prisoner made a hearty breakfast.' Crowds waiting outside to see the notice go up. Silly women singing 'Abide With Me'; you might even be able to hear them. . . . He shuddered, remembering that he had himself thought that such a murder might be committed at The Laburnums. In every respect but the act, he *was* a murderer—at least, he had let himself think murderous thoughts. It was horrible, horrible. . . .

A still more acutely self-conscious Mr. Pendleton rose to greet the inspector when he arrived, courteous but business-like. 'I'm afraid I'll have to ask you a few questions, Mr. Pendleton,' he said, and drew up a chair. 'I'm sure you understand why. I don't think we shall have much trouble in clearing this up.' Mr. Pendleton said he hoped not, and then, thinking that his voice had sounded curiously guilty, repeated it, too loudly.

The interrogation began. His tongue felt swollen, and he realised that a hideous embarrassment was making him stutter in his replies. It seemed impossible, somehow, that the Inspector could believe him. And, all the time, insistent almost to the point of utterance, lay the thought at the back of his brain, the thought in which he had actually exulted earlier in the day, that he might well have been himself the murderer. At last it was finished.

'I'm very sorry, Mr. Pendleton,' said the inspector, 'but you'll appreciate that we'll have to get these details corroborated. I hope it won't take too long. It'll just be a matter of sending round to your house and asking your wife a few questions—perhaps getting along a photograph.'

They were going to tell Marjorie! She'd be terrified. He was terribly late already. 'Surely, surely that's not necessary, inspector?' he said, and then realised that the mere fact of his asking had made it more necessary than ever.

'I'm afraid it is,' the inspector said dryly. 'I hope you'll ask for anything you want while you're waiting.' He went with the sergeant into the next room, and the telephone tinkled there.

They gave him hot cocoa which he could not drink. He sat with his head in his hands and thought, while a constable busied himself behind the desk, and the clock ticked interminably. He thought of his cosy fireside, his warmed slippers and Marjorie, and he ached to be back home with her. He had loved her always—he knew that now. How could he ever have wanted to hurt her? No, it hadn't been that, quite. But he had allowed himself to dream ugly dreams, and had never recognised their ugliness till now. 'I wouldn't ever have done it, really,' he whispered to himself, again and again. 'I didn't ever want to, really.'

In his new humility, he acknowledged to himself that he was not worthy of her. What grand times they'd had together! How happy she had made him. A woman of spirit, too, not just a good housewife. How could she have been so patient with his muddling incompetence for so long? And if she had grumbled sometimes, was he not also to blame for that, with his smugness, his strutting, infantile rages?

The clock ticked on, and the papers rustled on the desk, and new, honest resolutions grew up from his self-abasement. He would know himself better in future, be more understanding, see that Marjorie's life was happier and fuller. He would work for promotion for her sake. In his mind, he had wronged her hideously, but he would make amends. She should never feel disappointed in him again.

At last the car drove up outside. Two strange policemen came in, and with them, her face white and tear-stained,

was Marjorie herself. ‘Oh Harry! . . . Harry!’ she whispered, and he hugged her, while the sergeant and the inspector exchanged looks and decided that they would have to go on looking for Dubinsky after all. And then Marjorie’s relief turned to indignation, and she addressed herself to the sergeant and the inspector in forthright terms, until Mr. Pendleton had to intervene and point out that they had only been doing their duty. And then there were apologies, and Mr. Pendleton was given a special document proving that he was not Dubinsky, in case he was stopped again. And of course they were taken home in the police-car, and if Marjorie noticed that her husband’s breath smelt strongly of gin and beer, she did not bother to mention it.

Not until long after the lights had been put out in the bedroom at The Laburnums did Mr. Pendleton remember the revolver. He knew, he was sure now that he would never fire it; but it was silly to leave loaded weapons lying about. Stealthily he slipped out of bed, and tiptoed to the drawer. He took out the revolver and felt for the magazine. There was not a cartridge in it. Marjorie herself must have unloaded it.

A new, clammy fear gripped Mr. Pendleton. Had she glimpsed the monstrous thoughts which had passed through his mind, and taken precautions? Her voice came sleepily from the bed. ‘What are you doing?’ she said.

He must know now—now that his madness was gone for ever. Obscurely he craved her forgiveness for the crime he could not confess.

‘Marjorie,’ he said, ‘did you unload the revolver?’

Her voice was wide-awake now. ‘Yes. Don’t worry about it now, darling.’

‘But . . . why did you?’

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For a second she did not answer. Then, half-nervously, 'You'll think I'm an awful idiot, Harry. But—you see, I was afraid . . .'

'Afraid of what?' he asked, harsh in his anxiety.

'You see,' she said at last, 'I've got such a horrible temper . . . and sometimes we quarrel, and I don't mean anything, really, but there's a sort of demon gets hold of me . . . Oh Harry, I might have picked it up without realising and . . .' Her voice trailed off. 'Of course, it couldn't happen *really*, but . . .'

'Of course it couldn't, darling,' said Mr. Pendleton, sighing comfortably. 'Still, perhaps you were wise.' He put down the revolver, closed the drawer and went back to bed.

#### FEAR NOT.

*Fear not, ye tender infants of the spring,  
This furious blizzard nor these swarming flakes,  
For this white garment January makes  
Is not your shroud, but shawl for christening,  
But fear the sun that comes with bridegroom's ring  
And with a princely kiss each bud awakes,  
For April then, at night turned Herod, takes  
A frosty sword and slays you slumbering.*

*And so, ye nurslings of a heavenly birth,  
Fear not when old age wreathes the head in snow,  
If your eternal root be untouched still;  
But fear when all is fair upon your earth  
The sudden stroke, the unexpected blow—  
These have the power to freeze and, freezing, kill.*

A. D. WALMSLEY.

**BY THE WAY.**

THE following very remarkable utterance by the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Lords hardly seems to have attracted the attention it deserves. After the Paymaster-General had moved, on March 10, that the Draft Unemployment Benefits Orders, as reported from the Special Orders Committee, should be approved, Lord Snell rose up and spoke as follows :

' My Lords, I only wish to say on behalf of my noble friends that it is not our business to be satisfied with these Orders, or pleased with the extent to which they go, but, so far as they go, we are very glad to give them our support in the hope that without too long delay further advances will be made.'

That was his whole speech : it reminds one of Kipling's 'Pass the hat for your credit's sake and pay, pay, pay !' In short, it is not the business of the Labour Party—so one of its most trusted leaders declares—to do anything but hope for more. This is surely to give to the British working-man far less of a tribute to his self-respect and hatred of charity than he unquestionably deserves : it is the abnegation too of constructive criticism in the difficulties of government, a yielding up of one of the primary duties of an Opposition.

★ ★ ★

One by one, either from their own pens or from the pens of sympathetic narrators, the public has been given the life-

stories of the principal pioneers of the Labour movement : when Lord Elton publishes the promised life of Ramsay MacDonald the tale will really be complete. Of the two, biography is in some measure to be preferred to autobiography : a second person, however sympathetic, is less likely to be in the main an apologist, though against that must obviously be set a less exact knowledge of the motives and possibly of the facts also. The latest to join the company is Mary Agnes Hamilton, and though her *Arthur Henderson* (Heinemann, 15s. n.) is written with an immense enthusiasm as well as affection for her subject, who can indeed do no wrong, still it is a careful and—within the limitations imposed by enthusiasm and affection—a dispassionate study of the life-story of the man who, with Ramsay MacDonald, did more than anyone else to make a Labour Government a reality. It is an odd commentary upon political lives that, whereas at one time Ramsay MacDonald was in the wilderness and Arthur Henderson in the War Cabinet, at another the former was Prime Minister of a National Government and Henderson rallying the embittered Opposition. This bitterness, though expression of it was foreign to Henderson's big nature, is only too evident in his biographer, who does not hesitate to speak of 'the easy and indifferent lightness with which MacDonald broke old ties, and the careless contempt he showed for old associations and old loyalties' : no one who knew MacDonald well in his last years could truthfully endorse that. I can myself remember much to refute its justice. But, apart from such lapses, this is a well-documented, valuable biography of a man who throughout his life gave abundant evidence of that sturdiness of outlook, that kindly strength and that stalwart rectitude that we like to think essentially British : few have fought harder and made fewer enemies than 'Uncle Arthur,' and it is with the

character that underlay his career that his biographer is most successful.

We are perhaps a difficult people to understand : many tales of the European War go to prove it. If any foreigner has a genuine desire to understand not only some of the things we did in the War but also the spirit in which they were done, he can hardly make a better beginning than by reading *Alarms and Excursions*, by Lieut.-General Sir Tom Bridges (Longmans, 12s. 6d. n.). Regular readers of the CORNHILL will no doubt remember that graphic story of St. Quentin at the start of the Retreat in 1914 written by Col. W. W. Jelf and entitled 'The Master Hand' : here it is. There was no concealment amongst soldiers that the hero of that episode was Tom Bridges, and it is told here simply and modestly in the first person. That is not all that is told : Mr. Winston Churchill, in a Foreword which is generous, as the author and he have not always agreed, calls the auto-biography 'this gay story of grim events' : it is that, but it is much more. Tom Bridges is not merely a gay and gallant soldier covered with wounds and quips ; of such—happily—our Army was never short ; he was in addition a fine Commander and also a skilled negotiator and ambassador—he became, for instance, in his own cheery phrase, 'Head House Maid to the Near East' throughout those very difficult months following on the Armistice, and he was much else besides, not least in the United States with Balfour and also Reading. He tells his life-story, from early days in India to his Governorship of South Australia, with simplicity, modesty, and unfailing gaiety : the book is crowded with stories, some good, some very good, and some more even than that : the story of the rescue of Minoru and Aboyneur from Russia is of one kind, that of the rescue of the Emperor

Karl and his wife by a British major another. It is, in brief, an extraordinarily interesting as well as entertaining record of a splendid career—one of the very best autobiographies yet produced by the War.



One of the most striking phenomena about modern literature is the number of women-writers, young and old—but mostly young, sometimes very young—who give to the reading public a very excellent first novel. What is almost as striking is the diminution of that excellence as novel succeeds novel: those who proceed from excellence to established renown are but a small fraction of those whose progress is downhill. The truth of this will, I fancy, not be denied by anyone tolerably familiar with the fictional output of to-day, and it is perhaps depressing. But a small fraction do proceed upwards, and of these it is to be expected, at any rate very cordially hoped, that Miss Olivia Daniell will be one. Her publishers (Constable) state that they believe her first novel, *The Road from Jericho* (7s. 6d. n.), 'to be a performance of quite unusual quality': publishers' beliefs are taken often, and often unjustly, *cum grano salis*; I feel that in this particular case they will not be—beyond any doubt this novel is 'of quite unusual quality.' Its story is simple and yet unusual; it is told elusively, occasionally almost too elusively perhaps, but with an unusual feeling for atmosphere and for beauty. There are but three characters who really count, Mirella, Stephen, and Ralph—though Janet, the Hentys, and Miss Charteris all make decided contributions: the eternal triangle once more, thinks the reader—wrongly: it is a triangle, but one with novelty and charm. The title is, like the book, elusive, and that in a title is a mistake: throughout these pages runs quietly, yet pervad-

ingly, the appeal of two loved Scottish properties, Minyeeve and Byvie, water and the hills of Galloway—and the dogs. For a first novel the assurance of the writing is really notable : I greatly trust that Miss Daniell will have, and continue to have, the success that in this novel her work deserves.

Another woman's first novel, *Lottery Luck*, by L. Reve Jackson (Cassell, 7s. 6d. n.), also well deserves attention. The story is told in a slightly disjointed fashion and the brevity of many sentences is characteristic of the staccato style, but the story itself is both attractive and out of the ordinary : the old idea of wealth suddenly descending on a household is given quite a new turn by the household being that of two elderly French people running a hotel in the South of France : Julie, Antoine, Louise, Marie and her baby Juliette are all dexterously and lightly sketched. There is a villain, there is drama, there is happiness. A very pleasant and creditable piece of work for a new writer.

\*       \*       \*

There must come a day, I suppose, when every possible way of ' bumping off ' undesirables has been utilised by our ingenious creators of detective fiction ; but that does not seem yet to have arrived. I have not read, I am sorry to say, Miss Josephine Bell's first two stories of murder—I must clearly amend my deficiencies, for her third, *Fall Over Cliff* (Longmans, 7s. 6d. n.), is exceedingly good, and, which is perhaps even rarer, has an originality of plan. Unless the reader quickly acquires confidence in the author's ingenuity (but that he assuredly does) it all proceeds so obviously as almost to be unentertaining, but the confidence that it will not turn out to be at all obvious is not misplaced ; and, apart from that—and to say more would be unfair—there is one of the neatest little ends (concerned, it is true, with a detail only, but we all know the importance of detail in

murder cases) that I can remember to have come across. It sent me back at once to the early pages : I am not quite, quite sure that at the end of one sentence in the book Miss Bell is absolutely fair—but that is a matter, no doubt, of argument, and the doubt increases the interest and the admiration. But, delightful as is the domestic menage of the Wintringhams—one of the few couples in modern fiction who are genuinely in love with one another—Miss Bell must, I think, take care that she does not overdo the contrast between playfulness and murder. By any standard, however, an unusually good detective story.

\*     \*     \*

Dr. L. P. Jacks is a man of distinction as educationist, editor, and author : in this last capacity he has now written a novel which is, so the reader is told by the publisher (Methuen), a return 'to the vein of allegorical story-telling of two earlier books' : these, unfortunately, I have not read. Perhaps, if I had, I should quickly have understood, if not the whole of the inner meaning, at any rate the outward intention of *The Stolen Sword* (6s. n.) : as it is, handicapped by unfamiliarity, I have to confess myself defeated. It is, we are also told, in some measure autobiographical—that is perplexing : 'but something is also offered to those who can read between the lines.' It may be so, but it would appear to be meant for the specialist. It is a very queer and, to all intents and purposes, disconnected and indeed uncompleted tale : one reader at all events would like to know what attitude it is suggested ought to have been adopted by the police after the return of Loo and the narrator from the dropping of the coffin (and the Sword) into the sea. Allegorical ? Possibly : this 'tale of an unbroken covenant' remains a matter for speculation and conjecture.

G.

## THE 'CORNHILL' COMPETITION.

## DOUBLE ACROSTIC NO. 175.

PRIZES of books to the value of £1, from John Murray's catalogue, are offered to the two solvers whose letters are first opened. Answers, containing the coupon from page iv, must be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, 50 Albemarle Street, W.1, and must reach him by 30th May.

'In \_\_\_\_\_ she \_\_\_\_\_ to walk forlorn,  
Till cold winds woke the gray-eyed morn'

1. 'And pardon that thy \_\_\_\_\_ should be sung  
Even into thine own soft-conch'd ear ;'
2. 'I warm'd both hands before the fire of \_\_\_\_\_,'
3. 'O thou, that dear and happy Isle  
The garden of the world \_\_\_\_\_,  
Thou Paradise of the four seas  
Which Heaven planted us to please,'
4. 'Beneath those rugged \_\_\_\_\_s, that yew tree's shade  
Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,'
5. 'When we too \_\_\_\_\_  
In silence and tears,'

Answer to Acrostic 173, March number : 'With claret and sherry,  
theorbo and voice !' (Thomas Jordan : 'Coronemus nos Rosis antequam marcescant'). 1. CreatureS (Wordsworth : 'Ode'). 2. LotH (Keats : 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'). 3. AwakE (William Allingham : 'The Fairies'). 4. RiveR (E. B. Browning : 'A Musical Instrument'). 5. EveR (Wordsworth : 'The Solitary Reaper'). 6. TheY (Shelley : 'Music, when Soft Voices die').

The first correct answers opened were sent by Mrs. Owen, Green Hall, Carmarthen, and 'Mrs. Carré,' Brant Cottage, Osmington Mills, Weymouth, who are invited to choose books, as mentioned above.  
N.B.—Sources need not be given.

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